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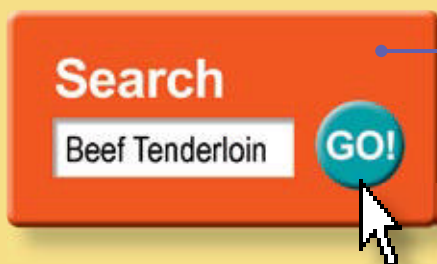
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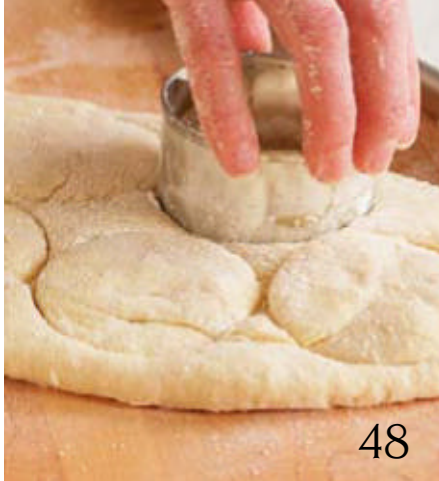


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- ◆ QUICK
Under 45 minutes
- ◆ MAKE AHEAD
Can be completely prepared ahead but may need reheating and a garnish to serve
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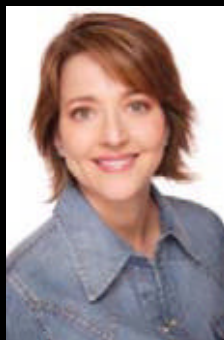
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Spring to the rescue

The rich and comforting foods of winter are great for keeping us warm, but by April, we're ready for something a little lighter. Just in time, spring arrives, bringing with it beautiful, seasonal vegetables to inspire us. Here, then, are menu ideas for special occasions as well as everyday eating that get you into the swing of the season. (And don't miss the fabulous spring menu feature starting on p. 38.)

Note: Before you start cooking, be sure to check the yield of every recipe; you might have to double or halve it.

Graduation Dinner Party

Set out the carrots to nibble on before dinner.

Baby Carrots Pickled in Champagne & Sherry Vinegars, p. 54

Roasted Cornish Game Hens with Wildflower Honey & Orange, p. 42

Pan-Seared Artichokes with Sherry Vinegar & Thyme, p. 19

Rhubarb Brown Sugar Crumble, p. 63

To drink: A young, fruity Pinot Noir with bright red-berry and spice notes, like the 2005 Chateau St. Jean, Sonoma County, \$20

Easter Dinner

The glazed ham needs to rest for 20 to 30 minutes after it's baked, giving you time to make the sauce and roast the asparagus and carrots.

Oven-Glazed Ham with Tangerine Marmalade Glaze & Sauce, p. 47

Roasted Asparagus with Lemon & Olive Oil, p. 42

Maple Pan-Roasted Baby Carrots, p. 53

Flaky Buttermilk Biscuits, p. 49

Strawberry-Rhubarb Pie, p. 62

To drink: A juicy Pinot Gris from Oregon, like the 2005 King Estate, \$16

3 ideas for any night of the week

Easy entertaining

Wild Mushroom Toasts, p. 40

Sear-Roasted Halibut with Roasted Red Pepper Purée, p. 84a

Sautéed spinach with garlic

Bourbon-Chocolate Mousse,
back cover

To drink: A crisp, dry Riesling like the 2005 Mönchhof Estate, Mosel, Germany, \$15

A boldly flavored pasta supper

Penne with Asparagus, Olives & Parmigiano Breadcrumbs, p. 84a

Garden Lettuces with Garlic Chapons, p. 41

Vanilla Ice Cream with Espresso-Caramel Sauce, p. 43

To drink: A crisp Sauvignon Blanc with tart citrus and herb notes, like the 2005 Dry Creek Vineyards Fumé Blanc, Sonoma County, \$13.50

Celebrate the season

Broiled Lamb Skewers with Baby Arugula & Lemon Vinaigrette, p. 84a

New Potatoes with Butter, Shallots & Chervil, p. 42

Strawberry-Rhubarb Compote with Vanilla & Cardamom, p. 61,
over vanilla ice cream

To drink: A supple, spicy Shiraz blend, like the 2005 Penfolds Koonunga Hill Shiraz-Cabernet, southeastern Australia, \$14

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from the editor

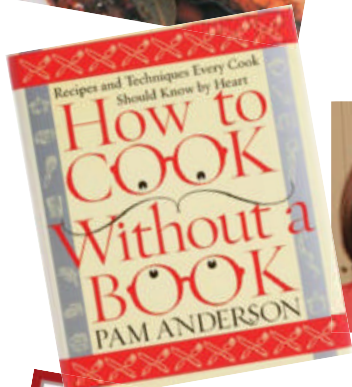
A Few Great Cooks



Abby Dodge



Molly Stevens



Pam Anderson



Tony Rosenfeld

It's a funny thing, but every time we run a story written by one of our contributing editors, that feature always winds up at the top of the reader survey poll we do for every issue. I guess it really isn't so odd when you think about who these people are: They're great cooks completely devoted to making food that home cooks will enjoy cooking and eating. Not only do they write for *Fine Cooking*, but they also spend their spare time mentoring other cooks, speaking about cooking, and writing cookbooks.

Most of you longtime readers are probably on a first-name basis with Abby (Dodge), Molly (Stevens), Pam (Anderson) and Tony (Rosenfeld), but if you're a newcomer to *Fine Cooking*, I can tell you a few great ways to get to know them. First, visit www.finecooking.com, where many of their recipes and techniques, from Abby's pies and Molly's braises, to Pam's sauces and Tony's sautés, are available to you. Second, check out the amazing cookbooks they've written. Abby's *The Weekend Baker*, Molly's *All About Braising*, and Pam's *How to Cook Without a Book* were classics the minute they hit the shelves. And now, we're excited to let you know that Tony has just written his first cookbook, *150 Things to Make With Roasted Chicken—and 50 Ways to Roast It*. It's being published by our very own Taunton Press this spring (and is available to order from our Web site now).

Tony has a killer knack for taking everyday food and making it really sing, so the very idea of 150 of his delicious recipes all in one place—from Roast Chicken with Caramelized Shallots and Fingerling Potatoes to Spicy New Mexican Green Chile Chicken Stew—is enough to make me grab a copy of this book for everyone I know. And now that I've read through all the valuable tips and techniques he has included (brining, grill-roasting, sear-roasting, making a pan sauce, carving a chicken, making herb butters, spice rubs, and vinaigrettes), I'm convinced that it's a downright steal at \$14.95. With 50 ways to roast a chicken (and the recipes work for one or two chickens) and 150 ways to use the leftovers, you could cook from this book for a year and not get bored.

Congratulations to Tony and thanks to all of our contributing editors for keeping us endlessly supplied with tasty recipes and useful techniques.

—Susie Middleton, editor

P.S. If you've got any rhubarb left over after making the desserts on pp. 60–63, make my chutney, at right. It keeps for two weeks in the fridge.



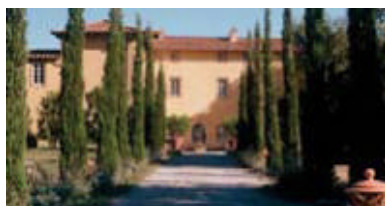
Rhubarb & Dried-Cherry Chutney

Yields about 1 cup.

This is a lovely condiment for grilled pork loin or roasted chicken.

- 1 cup medium-diced fresh rhubarb**
- ½ cup small-diced onion**
- ¼ cup coarsely chopped dried cherries**
- ¼ cup granulated sugar**
- ¼ cup sherry vinegar**
- 1 Tbs. honey**
- ½ tsp. finely grated lemon zest**
- ¼ tsp. kosher salt**

Combine all the ingredients in a small saucepan. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat, cover, and simmer over medium to medium-low heat until the onions are mostly translucent and the juices are beginning to thicken, about 5 minutes. Uncover and simmer, stirring frequently with a heatproof spatula, until very thick, another 6 to 8 minutes. Let cool completely in the pan before storing in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 2 weeks.



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from our readers

Pound cake worth its weight in gold but lighter than air

Thank you, Nicole Rees. I have been after the ultimate pound cake for at least 25 years, and I finally found it in your wonderful recipe in *Fine Cooking* #84 (January 2007). I can't tell you how many pound cakes I've tried, only to throw them away. This one is simply heavenly, with a fine, light texture and the lovely vanilla and butter taste you want in a pound cake. I am so happy I decided to try it. It's a real winner.

—Jeri Woodward, Seal Beach, California

Prep, then put it away

Susie Middleton's "Mess in Place" editorial (*Fine Cooking* #84) rings true, especially when cooking for a crowd. I always do my "mise" (didn't know it had a name) when I bake, but I take it a step further by immediately returning the used item back to the cabinet. That way, there's no second guessing whether I've added it or not. It's especially helpful when the phone rings or your child needs your attention right away.

—Eileen Taylor, via email

Editors' note: "Mise" is short for "mise en place," which is the French term for having everything prepped and organized before starting to cook.

And with your chocolate tart, how about a pint of stout?

Congratulations on your terrific magazine. As an avid home cook, I find your balance of sensible instruction, luscious recipes, and menu ideas to be splendid. I do have one bone to pick, however. I notice wine suggestions at every turn, whether it be in an article or as a suggestion with a recipe or a menu. Wine is an excellent companion to food, but it seems that another flavorful and artistic choice has been overlooked by your talented staff—beer.

In the last 5 to 10 years, we've enjoyed a dramatic increase in variety, choice, and availability of quality beer.

American craft brewers and artisan brewers from around the world create interesting and versatile beers that can be the perfect finishing touch for flavorful meals.

For instance, I believe you haven't lived until you've had a smooth and rich stout alongside dessert—one as simple as homemade chocolate brownies or as decadent as tiramisù. The world of cheese pairing knows no better companion than beer. Beer is also a great ingredient for sauces, braises, and marinades. As a self-proclaimed beervangelist, I'd love to see you explore the rewarding world of beer in *Fine Cooking*.

—Fred Bueltmann, president,
Michigan Brewers Guild

Editors' reply: Well, you must have been sending us subliminal messages, Fred, as we've had beer on the brain, too. We recently assigned two beer stories that will appear in issues later this year. Tim Gaiser, our wine writer, is working on a beer primer (with food pairings) for our August issue. And we'll also be featuring a brewery in our Artisan Foods department. Oh, yes, and we haven't forgotten to add a few beer pairing suggestions to recipes coming up this summer. ♦

Here's the place to share your thoughts on our recent articles or on your food and cooking philosophies. Send your comments to Letters, *Fine Cooking*, PO Box 5506, Newtown, CT 06470-5506, or by email to fc@taunton.com.

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ON THE FRONT BURNER

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ON THE FRONT BURNER

Easter Menu Planner



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Perfect Popovers

Herb-Crusted Rack of Lamb

Butter Lettuce & Artichoke Salad

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Book Preview

Looking for ways to get fresh meals on the table every night? Food Network host Robin Miller has plenty of strategies up her sleeve, from prepping ingredients days in advance to making creative use of leftovers. Her newest book, *Quick Fix Meals*, is being published by The Taunton Press this month—get a preview at FineCooking.com.

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FOOD NETWORK CHEF *Cat Cora*



Whether she's cooking for a wedding for 200 or entertaining a couple of friends at home, **Tasha DeSerio** ("Spring Menu," p. 38) likes to put together elegant but easy-to-prepare menus that feature local, seasonal vegetables. Formerly a cook at Chez Panisse restaurant and café, Tasha is the proprietor of Olive Green Catering in Berkeley, California. She also teaches cooking and writes about food.

Few people know meat the way **Bruce Aidells** ("Ham," p. 44) does. In addition to writing *Bruce Aidells's Complete Book of Pork* and *The Complete Meat Cookbook*, Bruce founded the Aidells Sausage Company and continues to help various pork producers develop fine hams and bacon for retail (see *Where to Buy It*, p. 78). Eager for a new challenge, Bruce will star in cooking segments this spring on his local ABC affiliate (KGO) in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Peter Reinhart ("Biscuits," p. 48) was the co-founder of Brother Juniper's Bakery in Santa Rosa, California, and is the author of seven books on bread and food, including *The Bread Baker's Apprentice*, which was named Cookbook of the Year in 2002 by both the James Beard Foundation and the International Association of Culinary Professionals. His new book, *Whole Grain Breads*, will be published in the fall. Peter is a baking instructor at Johnson & Wales University in Charlotte, North Carolina.

Dan Barber ("Carrots," p. 51) was introduced to farming as a child at Blue Hill Farm in the Berkshire Mountains of Massachusetts. Today, Dan is the chef and co-owner of two restaurants: Blue Hill, in New York City, and Blue Hill at Stone Barns, in

Pocantico Hills, New York. He also serves as the creative director of Stone Barns Center for Food & Agriculture, which supplies fresh ingredients to his restaurants.

Tony Rosenfeld ("Shrimp Sautés," p. 56) is a contributing editor to *Fine Cooking*. He's also a co-owner of b.good, a group of healthful fast-food restaurants in the Boston area for which he oversees the food. "We're opening our third store in three years, and it's pretty gratifying that we still do everything in-house, from cutting a couple of hundred pounds of potatoes each day for the baked fries to making all of the different homemade sauces."

Karen Barker ("Rhubarb," p. 60) is the pastry chef and co-owner—with husband Ben Barker—of the Magnolia Grill restaurant in Durham, North Carolina. She describes her baking as "down-home American with a modern twist." A native of Brooklyn, New York, Karen is a graduate of The Culinary Institute of America and is the author of two cookbooks, *Not Afraid of Flavor* and *Sweet Stuff: Karen Barker's American Desserts*. She won a James Beard Award for outstanding pastry chef in 2003.

Like many of us, **Adam Ried** ("Knife Sharpeners," p. 64) is a kitchen equipment junkie with loads of questions about the good, the bad, and the ugly of the cookware world. With 10 years of equipment-testing experience under his belt, Adam now works as a food and travel writer, as a recipe developer and tester, and as the cookware specialist on the PBS show *America's Test Kitchen*. ♦



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It's Artichoke Time: Eat your heart out

BY RUTH LIVELY

There's something deeply satisfying about eating a whole artichoke one leaf at a time, dipping each leaf in melted butter or a tangy vinaigrette. And when you're done with the leaves, the best part awaits you: the soft, fleshy bottom with its sweet, earthy flavor.

Leaf by leaf is how I ate artichokes growing up, but over the years I've become partial to cooking the hearts. To me, this is when artichokes really get interesting—even though it takes a little extra prep work (see photos opposite) to get at this treat.

An edible flower

The part of the artichoke we eat is the flower bud. If left on the plant, the bud would open and the central choke would blossom into a lovely violet-blue flower.

The peak season for artichokes runs from March through May, but they have a secondary season in the fall. If you're lucky, in spring you can also find baby artichokes. These are not younger artichokes but rather small buds that grow on side shoots off the central stem. They don't have a developed choke inside, so they're easier and quicker to prep.

Artichokes' mild, delicate flavor goes hand in hand with all kinds of fats: butter, olive oil, mayonnaise, cream, and cheeses, particularly well-aged ones. Citrus juices and vinegars help cut their sweetness a bit, while fresh herbs and spices, such as thyme, rosemary, chives, tarragon, and mint, along with coriander and fennel seeds, add a fresh, perfumy note.

Tips for buying and prepping

Buy artichokes that feel heavy for their size, with leaves closed up tightly. Avoid very browned and battered artichokes, although a little darkening on the leaves is all right. The discoloration is usually a result of a light frost, and some people argue that frost-kissed artichokes taste the best. While the cut end of the stem will probably be a little browned, pass over any that are blackened or dry—they're past their prime. Stored in the crisper drawer of the refrigerator, unwashed artichokes keep well for up to a week.

When you cut artichokes, exposure to the air, or oxidation, causes the cut sides to darken. To maintain their color, you can rub the trimmed areas with lemon or drop them in a bowl of water with a few squeezes of lemon juice. But if you're going to sauté or roast the artichokes, don't bother with the lemon. Instead, toss them with a little olive oil right after prepping them; this seems to seal the surface enough to prevent oxidation.

Boil or steam to eat whole

To prepare artichokes for cooking whole, cut off the top inch with a serrated knife. Trim the stem, leaving as much as 3 inches attached, if you like (stems are perfectly edible and delicious). With scissors, trim off the prickly tops of each remaining leaf.

At this point, you can either boil or steam them. I usually boil them in water with a little olive oil, white wine, and one or more flavorings, such as lemon juice, orange zest, peeled and sliced garlic cloves, peppercorns, coriander, or fennel seeds. Cook them until a leaf pulls out without lifting the whole head out of the water, 30 to 45 minutes.

When cool enough to handle, gently squeeze the artichokes to extract excess water, transfer them to individual plates, and serve with a dipping sauce.

DIPPING SAUCE IDEAS:

Melted butter, lemon juice, and minced fresh chervil or chives.

Mayonnaise thinned with lemon juice and spiked with grated garlic and cayenne or curry powder.

Vinaigrette with olive oil, sherry vinegar or red-wine vinegar, and some anchovy paste or black-olive paste.



Pan-Seared Artichokes with Sherry Vinegar & Thyme

Serves four to six.

These artichokes are a versatile side dish for grilled, roasted, or braised chicken, lamb, or beef—or even duck breasts or veal chops.

6 large artichokes

4 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil

3 Tbs. sherry vinegar

3 medium cloves garlic, peeled and cut in half lengthwise

1 tsp. finely grated lemon zest (from 1 medium lemon)

½ tsp. kosher salt; more as needed

⅓ tsp. freshly ground black pepper; more as needed

1 tsp. chopped fresh thyme

Prepare the artichoke hearts following the photo-directions below.

Cut each half into two wedges and toss them with 1 Tbs. olive oil in a large bowl. Combine the vinegar with ¼ cup water in a small dish. Set aside.

Heat the remaining 3 Tbs. olive oil and garlic in a 10-inch straight-sided sauté pan over medium-high heat and cook,

stirring, until the garlic just starts to turn golden, 2 to 3 minutes. Remove the garlic with a slotted spoon and discard. Add the artichokes to the pan (they may splatter at first) and arrange them with one cut side down. Cook until nicely browned, 3 to 5 minutes. Turn and cook the other cut side until nicely browned, about 3 minutes more. Turn the artichokes on their curved side. Scatter the lemon zest on the artichokes and season with the salt and pepper.

Reduce the heat to low, add the vinegar and water, cover, and simmer until the liquid has reduced to about 1 Tbs. and the artichokes are tender when pierced with a skewer, about 5 minutes. (If the artichokes are still a bit undercooked after the liquid has reduced, turn off the heat and let them sit, covered, for a few more minutes until they reach the desired doneness.)

Remove the pan from the heat, scatter the thyme on the artichokes and stir well. Season to taste with more salt and pepper. Serve immediately, or let rest, uncovered, and serve slightly warm.



How to prep artichoke hearts



1 Snap off the dark-green outer leaves of the artichoke until only the pale, tender inner leaves remain.



2 Cut off all but 1 inch of the stem as well as the top third of the artichoke leaves.



3 Use a paring knife to peel away the tough outer layer of the stem and to remove the base of the leaves, leaving a smooth surface.



4 Cut the artichoke in half lengthwise; with a melon baller or small spoon, scoop out and discard the hairy choke and thorny inner leaves.

Easy ways with artichokes

The tender innermost leaves of artichokes and their meaty bottoms are called artichoke hearts. They're wonderful sautéed, braised, or roasted. And if they're very fresh, they're tender enough to eat raw.

Depending on the size of the artichokes and the recipe, you can use trimmed hearts cut in half or further cut them into quarters, wedges, or thin slices. Here are some ideas for using them:

Sauté thinly sliced artichoke hearts in olive oil with garlic. Add a splash of white wine and cook until tender.

Make an artichoke risotto by stirring sautéed artichokes gently into the rice during the last few minutes of cooking.

Braise artichoke halves or quarters with onion, whole garlic, carrots, and thyme in vegetable broth and white wine.

Compose a refreshing salad with thin slices of raw artichoke hearts tossed with olive oil, lemon juice, salt, pepper, and shaved Parmigiano.

Roast halved or quartered artichoke hearts in olive oil with potato wedges, thick slices of lemon, and black olives.

Ruth Lively cooks, writes, and gardens in New Haven, Connecticut. ♦

Discovering the Wines of Greece

BY TIM GAISER

My biggest wine discovery of 2006 was, without a doubt, Greece. After making two trips there last year and tasting several hundred remarkable wines, I'm convinced that Greek wines are the next big thing. And I'm not alone. Much of the wine community is buzzing with excitement about Greece, comparing it to the Spain of 10 years ago. Like Spanish wines then, Greek wines don't yet have a big following outside their own country, so you can still find great values over here. The combination of talented young winemakers, perfect climate, and brilliant indigenous grape varieties all add up to some of the most delicious and unusual wines in the world, and now's the perfect time to discover them. To get you started, here's a short primer on the country's best growing regions, grapes, and wines.

The grapes of Greece

During my travels, I found plenty of good values made from international varieties like Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon, but I was most impressed with the wines made from indigenous Greek grapes. Here are six varieties to look for, along with recommended bottles that, in my opinion, rank among the best wines Greece has to offer. (For sources, see p. 78.)



Macedonia, Thessaly, Peloponnese, and Santorini are some of Greece's major wine-producing regions.



Reds Most Greek reds are light, fruity quaffers, perfect for everyday drinking, but these two outstanding indigenous grapes are capable of producing world-class wines.

Xinomavro (ksee NOH mah vroh)

Xinomavro wines come in a range of styles, from light and fruity to intense, tannic, and age-worthy. Xinomavro combines the complex, supple fruit of Pinot Noir with the high natural acidity and tannin of Barbera.

What's it good with?

You can serve this wine with casual and formal dishes alike, anything from meatloaf, pasta with tomato sauce, and pizza to roast or grilled lamb, pork, or beef.

Recommended bottles:

2004 Alpha Estate Xinomavro, Amyndeon, \$38

2004 Boutari, Xinomavro, Naoussa, \$14

Agiorghitiko (ah yor YEE tee koh)

One of the greatest of all Greek grapes and wines, Agiorghitiko is grown primarily in the Peloponnese. With its ripe, dusty fruit and earthy qualities, Agiorghitiko reminds me of a Cabernet-Sangiovese blend.

What's it good with?

This wine is a natural partner for braised, grilled, or roasted lamb or veal. Rosé wines from Agiorghitiko grapes are delicious with grilled tuna or swordfish.

Recommended bottles:

2005 Palivou Agiorgitiko Rosé, Nemea, \$12

2003 Gaia Estate, Agiorgitiko, Nemea, \$18

2004 Domaine Spiropoulos Agiorgitiko, "Red Stag," Peloponnese, \$25

(continued on p. 22)



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(continued from p. 20)

Whites

Vibrantly fruity and tangy, Greek whites are perfect for spring and summer sipping.

Assyrtiko (ah SEER tee koh)

The greatest surprise and delight of my travels, Assyrtiko combines the acidity and mineral elements of Riesling with the delectable fruit qualities of Chardonnay. Expect succulent apple-pear fruit with bright citrus notes and pronounced minerality in a bone-dry wine. The Domaine Sigalas wine listed below is possibly my very favorite Greek wine.

What's it good with?

Assyrtiko is a delicious partner for grilled fish, chicken, or pork topped with citrusy sauces, or for pasta with cream sauces.

Recommended bottles:
2005 Domaine Sigalas Assyrtiko, Santorini, \$18

2005 Tsantali Ambelonas, Sauvignon Blanc-Assyrtiko, Agios Pavlos, \$14

Moschofilero (mos koh FEE le roh)

This versatile and aromatic grape hails from the Peloponnese region (see map, p. 20). It has distinctive gray skin and floral aromas, and it's used to make delicious dry still and sparkling wines as well as sweet dessert wines. With its exotic notes of flowers, spicy fruit, and crisp citrus, Moschofilero reminds me of a cross between a tangy Pinot Gris and a spicy Gewurztraminer.

What's it good with?

Enjoy Moschofilero as an aperitif with spring rolls or other Asian-inspired starters.

Recommended bottle:
2005 Tselepos Moschofilero, Mantinia, \$16

Also look for:

Roditis (roh DEE tees)

Like Pinot Grigio, Roditis has tangy lemon-lime notes and delicate floral aromas. Try the 2005 Ktima Kir Yianni "Petra," Naoussa, \$14; or the 2005 Domaine Skouras white, (Roditis-Moschofilero blend), \$13.

Malagousia (mah lah gou ZYA)

Malagousia is an aromatic grape, making for full-bodied wines with appealing exotic fruit, citrus, and jasmine flavors, reminiscent of Viognier. Try the 2005 Domaine Geroavassiliou Malagousia, Epanomi, \$17.

Contributing editor Tim Gaiser is a master sommelier and wine educator. ♦



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what's new

Get cracking

For convenience, nothing beats shelled walnuts, almonds, hazelnuts, and other nuts. But for snacking, it's fun to crack your own. Traditional pliers-style nutcrackers can be a hassle—you end up with a mess of scattered shells and a sore hand. The Chef's Planet nutcracker, on the other hand, makes the task not only easy but enjoyable. When I tried it with a bag of mixed nuts, it excelled at opening all types with minimal squeezing. The ergonomic handle and cracker fit in my palm and protected my fingers from being pinched while containing both the shells and the meat. The dishwasher-safe plastic nutcracker is \$15 at ChefsPlanet.com.

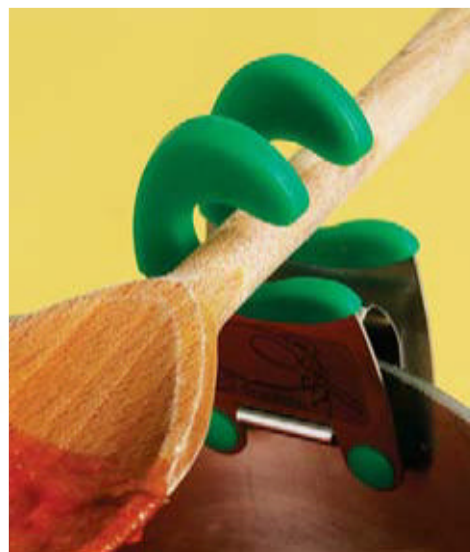


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BY LISA WADDLE

Mix-and-measure bowls

With these bowls from Dutch by Design, you can measure your liquids and then whisk them together in the same bowl. Lines on the inside of the richly colored melamine bowls indicate milliliters and ounces, and a wide spout makes pouring a breeze. The bowls are available at DutchByDesign.com (\$17.95 for the 1 liter and \$27.50 for the 2.5 liter).



A clip-on spoon rest

Where do you put your wooden spoon after stirring a pot of marinara, risotto, chili, or any type of sauce? If it goes on the counter, a plate, or even a spoon rest, you just have one more thing to clean. Along comes the Trudeau Pot Clip, which attaches to the side of any pot and holds your spoon horizontally above it. The spoon (or any other utensil) stays handy, the counter is less cluttered, and drips fall back into the pot, saving one step of cleanup. These spring-loaded clips come in four bright colors and are made of stainless steel and heat-resistant silicone. They sell for \$6.99 at ChefTools.com.

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Quicker quick bread

Despite their name, quick breads can seem anything but quick while they're baking—they can sometimes take up to an hour. This longer, slimmer loaf pan from King Arthur Flour helps speed along the cooking. While traditional loaf pans measure 8½ by 4½ inches, this one is 12 by 4 inches. When I tested the two sizes side by side with pumpkin bread, the King Arthur pan shaved 25 percent (or 16 minutes) off the cooking time, and the resulting loaf yielded appealingly trim slices. The white ceramic tea loaf pan sells for \$16.95 at KingArthurFlour.com.

test drive

Is this yogurt maker right for you?

I love yogurt, and making my own in reusable glass jars always seemed like a good idea, but I worried that it would be a huge project. Turns out, it's not. With a yogurt maker like the one at right from Euro Cuisine, the process is extremely easy. Just mix room-temperature milk with 6 ounces of plain yogurt or a packaged yogurt starter, pour the mixture into the jars, pop them into the machine, and turn it on. Come back 6 to 12 hours later and—voilà!—you've got yogurt.

How it performs

From the get-go, I was pleased with the results I achieved. My first batch was on the runny side, but the flavor was so much better than store-bought—clean, rich, and fresh—that I was encouraged to try again. And through trial and error, I've tweaked my yogurt's flavor and consistency—both of which depend mainly on the type of milk you begin with and the starter you use—to suit my taste.

To create the thick, creamy, mildly tangy results I desire, I use organic whole milk, a splash of heavy cream, and very thick, full-fat Fage Total Greek yogurt

as my starter and let the yogurt ferment for about 10 hours. For extra thickness, it helps to boil the milk and let it cool to room temperature before adding the starter; it also helps to stir in a little dry milk powder, because the extra protein helps the yogurt thicken. Each batch is good for about a week.

Features

This yogurt maker has a heater base, a cover, seven reusable glass jars with lids, and, of course, an instruction manual with a few recipes. As far as yogurt makers go, it's about as simple as they come, but I think a couple of extra features would make it truly user-friendly: a built-in timer, for starters, and an automatic on/off function.

I guess Euro Cuisine thought likewise, because in the time since I acquired this machine (model Y80), it has released an upgrade with a built-in timer. I suggest you look for that one. I've been able to find it only at Williams-Sonoma.com, where it sells for \$39.95. While you're there, you can also buy Euro Cuisine's yogurt starter, \$19.50 for 10 packets.



Pros: Easy to use. Generous three-year warranty. Yummy, pure, natural yogurt. Reusable glass jars.

Cons: Unless you buy the upgraded model, you have to keep track of the time yourself and remember when to turn off the machine. Jars need to be thoroughly rinsed before being placed in the dishwasher, or they won't come out clean.

The bottom line: If you eat a lot of yogurt (this machine makes seven 6-ounce jars) and you like the idea of creating your own, you can't go wrong. If you're a big fan of the texture of supermarket yogurts, which tend to be enhanced with pectin or gelatin, be aware that homemade yogurt won't be quite as firm.

—Kimberly Y. Masibay,
senior editor

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1/4 cup heavy cream

Cake: Nonstick cooking spray

1 bar (4 oz) 60% Cacao Bittersweet Chocolate
Baking Bar

8 Tbsp. (1 stick) unsalted butter

2 whole eggs

2 egg yolks

1/3 cup sugar

1/2 tsp. vanilla extract

1/4 cup cake flour

Raspberries and whipped cream for garnish

To make centers, melt chocolate and cream in double boiler. Whisk gently to blend. Refrigerate about 2 hours or until firm. Form into 6 balls; refrigerate until needed.

To make cake, heat oven to 400°F. Spray six 4-ounce ramekins or custard cups with cooking spray. Melt chocolate and butter in double boiler; whisk gently to blend. With an electric mixer, whisk eggs, yolks, sugar, and vanilla on high speed about 5 minutes or until thick and light. Fold melted chocolate mixture and flour into egg mixture just until combined. Spoon cake batter into ramekins. Place a chocolate ball in the middle of each ramekin.

Bake about 15 minutes or until cake is firm to the touch. Let it sit out of the oven for about 5 minutes. Run a small, sharp knife around inside of each ramekin, place a plate on top, invert and remove ramekin. Garnish with raspberries and a dollop of whipped cream.



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does it work?

Better than steel wool

You'd never guess what this object is for by just looking at it. It resembles a pile of gift ribbon, but it's actually meant for cleaning. Made from thin strips of cloth treated with an abrasive (it feels like very fine-grit sandpaper), the Sandclean does an amazing job of scrubbing pots, plates, and stovetops—tea and coffee stains disappeared from my

mugs with just a few swipes. Unlike steel wool, it doesn't rust or shred. It can be easy to forget the power behind the cloth, though—it scratched a plastic measuring cup and is not recommended for stainless-steel pans, crystal, bone china, or any delicate, painted surface. The Sandclean is available at Korin.com; it comes in two strengths, medium grit for \$7.50 and rough grit for \$8.50.

Everything *in* the kitchen sink

The kitchen sink just became a whole lot more interesting. Two manufacturers have recently introduced double-duty sinks—one of them can cook and the other washes dishes.



Boil and drain without lifting a pot

The Kohler PRO CookCenter has an integrated 8-quart cooking pot and heating element, so you can blanch green beans, simmer a soup, or boil pasta right in the sink—no more lugging heavy pots of water from sink to stove and back again. To boil pasta, just swivel the faucet over the pot, fill it with water, and turn on the heat. Instead of pouring off the water, you push a button and it drains. When you don't need the heating element, the cooking side of the sink converts to a small, regular sink. The CookCenter comes with a steamer insert and double boiler. Prices start at \$3,360. For more information visit US.Kohler.com.



Dishes come clean in this sink

If you've ever fantasized about leaving dirty dishes in the sink and having them clean themselves, KitchenAid's Briva In-Sink Dishwasher is your dream come true. One side of this stainless steel, double-bowl sink is a regular 8½-inch-deep sink. The other side is where the magic happens. It's a top-loading 14-inch-deep dishwasher that can hold up to five place settings. If you ever want to free up both sides of the sink, simply remove the racks, lid, and spray arm from the dishwasher, and it becomes an ordinary (though rather deep) sink. The In-Sink Dishwasher starts at \$1,800; for more information go to KitchenAid.com. ♦



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Teriyaki Bacon Chestnuts

Ingredients

- 1 jar **CROSSE & BLACKWELL®** Ham Glaze
- 2 8-oz. cans whole water chestnuts, drained
- 1 pound hickory-smoked bacon, cut in half
- 1/4 cup teriyaki sauce

Directions

Preheat oven to 350°F. Wrap each chestnut in bacon half and secure with a toothpick. Arrange chestnuts in a single layer in a shallow baking dish. Broil until crispy, about 5 minutes on each side; drain well. Blend Ham Glaze with teriyaki sauce. Pour over chestnuts and bake for 20 minutes. *Makes:* 6 servings

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Mint Kiwi Lemon Cheesecake

Ingredients

- 3/4 cup **CROSSE & BLACKWELL®** Mint Flavored Apple Jelly
- 1/2 c. **DICKINSON'S®** Lemon Curd
- 1 15-oz. pkg. refrigerated pie crusts, softened
- 1 package (8 oz.) cream cheese, softened
- 1 can sweetened condensed milk
- 1 egg
- 4 kiwi fruit, peeled & sliced
- Optional: whipped topping & lemon peel

Directions

Preheat oven to 300°F. Line a springform pan with pie crust. Beat cheese until smooth; blend in milk. Beat in egg; blend in Curd. Pour into springform pan. Bake for 55 minutes or until set. Cool completely before removing sides of pan. Heat Jelly over low heat until texture is smooth. Add in kiwi. Top cheesecake with kiwi mixture. Garnish with optional ingredients and serve. *Makes:* 10 servings

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Cajun Whitefish with Zesty Chutney Sauce

Ingredients

- 1 jar **CROSSE & BLACKWELL®** Zesty Shrimp or Seafood Sauce
- 1 jar **CROSSE & BLACKWELL®** Apricot Chardonnay Chutney
- 1 tablespoon Cajun seasoning
- 1 cup fine dry bread crumbs
- 1/2 cup shredded parmesan cheese
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 6 cod filets, rinsed & dried
- 2 eggs, beaten

Directions

Rinse & pat dry filets. Mix seasoning, bread crumbs & cheese. Dip filets in egg; coat filets with crumbs. Fry or drizzle with olive oil & bake at 350°F until filets are flaky when tested with a fork. Meanwhile, combine Sauce with Chutney; stir until blended. Cover & refrigerate until served. Serve fish hot with sauce mixture. *Serving Idea:* Fish is shown as an appetizer. Cut fish into small pieces before cooking. *Makes:* 6 servings

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The Perfect Cure

Delicious Italian-style cured meats made in the USA

BY LAURA GIANNATEMPO

The centuries-old Italian art of salt-curing and air-drying meats and sausages to make *salumi* (Italian-style cold cuts) is taking the United States by storm. Chefs from coast to coast are adding house-cured salumi plates to their menus, and a growing number of artisans are making high-quality salumi—including prosciutto, mortadella, and a variety of salami—right here in the U.S. We're featuring a few great examples of these domestic salumi here. We also spoke to a young couple in San Francisco who's selling their terrific salumi at local farmers' markets (see Artisan Foods, p. 32). ♦

A soppressata like no other

Fra'Mani's soppressata, modeled after northern Italy's *soppressa vicentina*, which is larger and more delicate in flavor than most soppressatas, won us over with its moist texture, full pork flavor, and well-balanced spiciness with hints of clove. Slice it as thinly as possible for your salumi platter. Fra'Mani also offers four other kinds of dry salami—all delicious—and a selection of fresh sausages. *Fra'Mani soppressata*, \$210 for 9 pounds (including shipping) at FraMani.com. *Fra'Mani salumi* are also available sliced to order at some specialty stores.



Smoked prosciutto, sliced & ready to eat

La Quercia, in Iowa, makes our favorite domestic prosciutto, so we were delighted to find that it also makes fantastic speck, which is smoked prosciutto. It has a mild smoky flavor that complements the prosciutto's natural sweetness. We're also partial to its tender, silky texture and nice chew. *Speck Americano*, \$69 for six 3-ounce packages, and *Prosciutto Americano*, \$65 for six 3-ounce packages at LaQuercia.us. Whole Foods Markets and some specialty stores carry both.

Sorting it all out

Salumi, Salame, Salami? No, they're not typos. There really is a difference.

Salumi is the Italian word for a variety of salt-cured, air-dried meats, usually made with pork.

Salami are cured sausages; they're just one type of salumi.

Salame is simply the singular of salami.



Salame with a twist

This mole salame made by Armandino Batali (Mario Batali's father) in his salumi shop in Seattle intrigued us with its unusual flavors. Spiced with typical Mexican mole ingredients, including chocolate, cinnamon, ancho, and chipotle peppers, it becomes more nuanced with each bite, finishing with a nice spicy kick. Along with regular pancetta and salami, the store offers several other untraditional salumi, including a lamb prosciutto. *Mole salame*, \$10.80 a pound at SalumiCuredMeats.com.

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Handcrafting Salumi in San Francisco

BY LAURA GIANNATEMPO

Toponia Miller and Taylor Boetticher didn't spend their honeymoon in Paris or the Caribbean. Instead, these two young Bay Area chefs planned a six-month trip to Europe with one thing in mind: meat. Armed with a passion for French charcuterie and Italian salumi (see Great Finds, p. 30), they made it a point to visit towns and regions in France, Spain, and Italy known for their cured meats.

While in Tuscany, they met one of Italy's foremost salumi makers, Dario Cecchini, and ended up spending three months at his side learning how to turn humble cuts of pork, like legs and shoulders, into rich, flavorful salumi. That's when it became clear they were not going to open a restaurant or start a catering business back in San Francisco. Instead, they would cure their own meats.

Together with their friend and fellow chef Chuck Traugott, they started Fatted Calf, an artisanal charcuterie that handcrafts a variety of salumi—including a subtly spiced fennel salame, a mild and rustic Genoa salame, and a tender, silky bresaola (salt-cured beef)—as well as

fresh sausages and French-style pâtés, confits, and terrines.

Toponia, Taylor, and Chuck make all their salumi and meats by hand and in small batches out of a rented kitchen. They use only sustainably raised, antibiotic-free meats and high-quality sea salts and seasonings, including locally grown organic garlic and herbs as well as other organic ingredients when they're available. Their pork comes from heritage breeds, mainly Berkshires and Red Waddles, but they don't always use the same breed for one kind of salame. "One batch is never exactly the same as the next; there are always subtle differences," says Toponia. Their salumi are hearty and delicious, with delicate hints of spices and seasonings that enhance the pork flavor rather than overwhelm it.

They sell their products exclusively at the Berkeley Farmers' Market and at San Francisco's Ferry Plaza Farmers' Market, but they have plans to open their own shop this fall—with an annexed kitchen and curing room—in the new Oxbow Public Market in Napa, California. *For more information, visit FattedCalf.com.* ♦

Fatted Calf's artisanal salumi include, clockwise from the top: Genoa salame, fennel salame, and pepper salame. Bottom: slices of bresaola.



To make salami, the first step is to grind the meat (usually pork). Each type of Fatted Calf salame is ground differently (some are coarser than others, and some have hand-cut fat in them as well). The ground meat is then seasoned with sea salt, spices, herbs, and sometimes wine and forced into natural hog or beef casings. Antonio Jeronimo, one of Fatted Calf's four workers, is shown cranking the handle of a "stuffer" to force the meat into a casing.



Once in their casings, the salami hang for 72 hours at room temperature to dry the meat slightly and to get the fermentation process started. This encourages the growth of the good bacteria that give salame its distinctive tangy flavor. The casings also start to develop a thin layer of mold, which helps prevent the meat from oxidizing and the fat from becoming rancid. Finally, the salami are transferred to a cold storage area. They are ready to eat after 60 to 100 days, depending on the type.

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Winning tip

Binder clip holds thermometer in place

I love my probe-style digital thermometer but found it would fall into or out of the pot when I was making candy. Now I attach a medium-size metal binder clip onto the side of the pot and slide the probe through the handles. It keeps the probe in the pot but lets it move slightly to allow for stirring.

—Laura Conger, Woodside, California

A prize for the best tip

We want your best tips—we'll pay for the ones we publish—and we'll give a prize to the cleverest tip in each issue. Write to Tips, *Fine Cooking*, PO Box 5506, Newtown, CT 06470-5506 or email ftips@taunton.com.

The prize for this issue's winner: A Swissmar Wenger Grand Maître 7-piece knife block set; value, \$200.



Paper plate to funnel spices

When I need to measure ground black pepper or other spices, it can be messy trying to grind directly into the teaspoon. Instead, I grind the spice onto a paper plate, then fold the plate in half, creating a funnel that neatly tips the spice into the measuring spoon.

—Maggie DeFazio, Holbrook, New York

Flavor sugar with citrus zest

Instead of garnishing desserts with confectioners' sugar, I sometimes like to use an orange-lemon sugar. I combine the zest of 2 oranges and 1 lemon with about 1 cup of granulated sugar in a food processor and process until it's fine but not powdery. The zest gives the sugar a wonderful fragrance and a bit of color, too. I love the sugar over lemon bars and other desserts, but it's also great for sweetening a cup of tea or sprinkling over buttered toast.

—Kate Johnston, Sacramento, California

TOO GOOD TO FORGET

Two avocado tips from *Fine Cooking* #9

Keeping halved avocados green

To keep cut avocados from turning brown when you want to store them, refrigerate them flesh side down in a bowl of water into which you have squeezed a little bit of lemon juice. The avocados will keep beautifully for a few days this way. The same method can also be used when preparing slices of avocado ahead of time for salads or garnishes.

—Janet C. deCarteret, Bellevue, Washington

Mashing avocado

For a quick and easy way to make a sublime guacamole, mash the avocado by putting the flesh through a potato ricer. The ricer gives the avocado a uniform consistency that is unequaled by any other mashing method. Be sure to mix in a few drops of lemon juice to prevent the avocado from browning.

—Antoinne Von Rimes, Santa Barbara, California



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Empty paper towel tubes store silicone mats

To keep my silicone baking mats neat and easy to find, I store them rolled up in empty cardboard paper towel tubes. On the outside of the tube I write what size mat it holds.

—Victoria DeLaney,
San Diego, California

Containing nuts while chopping

When chopping hard ingredients like roasted nuts, I put a cutting board inside my 11x13-inch baking pan, and then use my chef's knife to chop away. Pieces may bounce and roll off the board, but they land within the confines of the pan instead of on the counter or the floor. This method works even better if your pan has tall sides—mine is 3 inches high.

—Charles McEniry,
Stoughton, Wisconsin



Perfect lattice strips for pies

To cut even strips of dough for a lattice-top pie, I use my rasp-style grater (without a handle) as a guide. The long sides have curved, raw edges that are perfect for cutting through the dough. I lay the grater on the rolled out dough and press down to cut a strip. Then I move the grater so that the bottom edge is in the center of the strip I just cut and press down again, creating a strip that's half as wide as the grater. I continue this pattern over the entire pie round.

—Jean Brayman,
Fremont, Michigan

Saving leftover buttermilk

I can't always use an entire carton of buttermilk before it goes bad, so I portion it into zip-top plastic bags which I then flatten, stack, and freeze for up to two months. When I need to use it, I immerse the bag in warm water or defrost it on the counter. The thawed buttermilk won't be as creamy as it once was, so it's not ideal for sauces, but it works fine in baked goods like scones or cakes.

—Shirley Polk, Oliver, British Columbia

Whisk rather than stir

When baking, I find it easier to whisk together the dry ingredients in a bowl rather than stirring with a spoon. The whisk gets rid of any clumps and mixes thoroughly.

—Kerry Sherck, Adamant, Vermont

Baking liner keeps cupcakes from sliding

Having broken my cupcake carrier, I was in a quandary about how to transport two dozen cupcakes from my home to my grandsons'. All I had handy was my sheet-cake carrier, so I put a silicone baking mat on the bottom and filled it with cupcakes. It held them securely and safely, with no sliding around, so not a bit of frosting was smudged when I reached my destination.

—Donna Bridger,
Olympia Fields, Illinois

TWO WAYS TO FREEZE FRESH HERBS:

Make herb infusions in broth



I grow a variety of fresh herbs and can make only so much herb vinegar or flavored oil. To preserve the bounty, I make an herb-infused broth I can use all year round. I put herbs and chicken broth in equal amounts in a blender, pulse until smooth, then pour into ice cube trays and freeze. I pop the cubes out and store them in plastic bags in the freezer. One cube is about 2 tablespoons, and it adds great flavor to stews, sauces, and sautés.

—Angela Buchanan,
Longmont, Colorado

Freeze herbs whole

I freeze extra herbs from my garden by putting them on cookie sheets in the freezer. Once they're frozen, I transfer them to a plastic bag. They retain most of their vibrant flavor, and hardier herbs like rosemary and thyme can practically be interchanged for fresh. Leafy herbs like basil and parsley suffer in the looks department, though, turning dark and mushy, so they're best used only for cooking

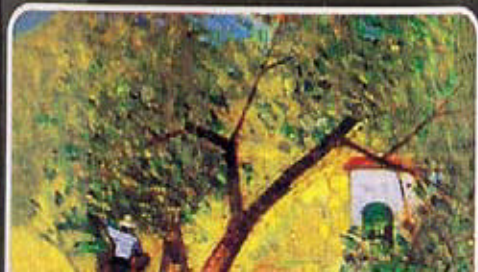
—Mary Rowsell, Russell, Ontario ♦

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BY TASHA DeSERIO

Some people plan dinner parties in their head or by paging through cookbooks or magazines for ideas. My approach is to let the market be my muse. And after months of hearty winter produce, the arrival of delicate spring vegetables at my local farmstand offers plenty of inspiration. It's easy to stroll through the market, eyeing a bunch of asparagus here and a basket of mushrooms there, and before I know it, I've got a plan for a simple but lovely dinner for six. That's what this menu is all about—highlighting what's fresh at the market, preparing it without too much fuss, and enjoying it with a few friends.

Even if it's still a bit cool where you live, warmer weather is just around the corner, and you'll soon see its effects at farmers' markets or in the produce section of your supermarket. Here's how I've created a menu around some of the fresher and perhaps even locally grown ingredients you'll come across.

Wild mushrooms are the happy result of plentiful spring rains. I like to sauté them with shallots and fresh thyme and add a little crème fraîche. Then I spoon them on toasts as “a little something” for guests as they arrive.

Garden lettuces are also coming into season. I'm lucky because my husband grows beautiful lettuces in our garden, but you'll see fine mesclun mixes in most markets. I like to serve these tender greens with garlic chapons, which are toasted crusts of bread that are rubbed with garlic.

Fresh asparagus and new potatoes round out a main course of roasted Cornish game hens. I cook the asparagus as simply as possible, roasting them with olive oil and tossing with lemon juice. And I treat the potatoes with a very light hand as well. I boil small ones (Yukon Golds or Yellow Finns work well) and then toss them with butter, shallots, and chopped fresh chervil, one of my favorite seasonal herbs.

I admit that my choice of dessert has no obvious link to the season. But who's going to argue with a dish of vanilla ice cream drizzled with an espresso-flavored caramel sauce? Some things are inspirational at any time of year.



A Taste of Spring

Welcome the season with a menu inspired by the market's freshest ingredients



Menu for six

Wild Mushroom Toasts



**Garden Lettuces
with Garlic Chapons**



**Roasted Cornish Game
Hens with Wildflower Honey
& Orange**

**New Potatoes with Butter,
Shallots & Chervil**

**Roasted Asparagus
with Lemon & Olive Oil**



**Vanilla Ice Cream with
Espresso-Caramel Sauce**





Wild Mushroom Toasts

Serves six.

These toasts are best slightly warm, so hold off on toasting the bread until just before serving. You can use cremini mushrooms if you can't find the exotic varieties listed below.

1 lb. wild mushrooms, such as chanterelles, maitakes, hedgehogs, or morels

2 Tbs. unsalted butter

2 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil; more as needed

Kosher salt

2 medium shallots, finely chopped (about ¼ cup)

2 tsp. chopped fresh thyme

½ cup crème fraîche (about 4 oz.)

1 Tbs. chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley

Freshly ground black pepper

18 slices baguette (cut ¼ to ½ inch thick)

¼ cup freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano

Gently clean the mushrooms with a damp cloth or a paring knife to remove any dirt or dark spots (see From Our Test Kitchen, p. 72, for tips on cleaning morels). Cut off any tough stems.

If the mushrooms appear muddy, quickly dip them into a large basin of water and drain. Leave small, bite-size mushrooms whole; quarter or halve larger mushrooms.

Melt 1 Tbs. of the butter together with 1 Tbs. of the oil in a 10-inch straight-sided sauté pan over medium-high heat. Add the mushrooms and a generous pinch of salt, and cook, stirring frequently, until any liquid has evaporated and the mushrooms are nicely browned, 5 to 8 minutes. (If the mushrooms are dry and the pan begins to scorch, add a drizzle of olive oil.) Remove the pan from the heat and transfer the mushrooms to a cutting board. Let them cool slightly and chop them coarsely.

Return the pan to the stovetop over medium heat and add the remaining 1 Tbs. butter and 1 Tbs. oil. When the butter has melted, add the shallots, thyme, and a pinch of salt. Cook, stirring, until the shallots are tender and lightly golden, about 3 minutes. Return the mushrooms to the pan, stir in the crème fraîche (if you're making this ahead, see the note at right), and cook, stirring, to coat the mushrooms with

the crème fraîche. Stir in the parsley and season with several grinds of pepper. Season with more salt and pepper to taste. Remove from the heat and hold in a warm spot.

Shortly before serving, position an oven rack about 6 inches from the broiler element and heat the broiler to high. Arrange the bread slices on a baking sheet and brush them with olive oil. Broil until the bread is golden, 1 to 2 minutes. Flip and toast the other side, about 1 minute. Spread the warm mushroom mixture on the toasts, sprinkle some of the Parmigiano-Reggiano on top, and serve.

Make-ahead tip: The mushroom topping can be made several hours ahead and refrigerated, but hold back about half of the crème fraîche. When you're ready to serve, reheat the mushrooms over low heat and add the rest of the crème fraîche (don't overheat or the cream will break).



Garden Lettuces with Garlic Chapons

Serves six.

Chapons are large, rustic croutons that are made from the crust of bread rather than the crumb and then rubbed with garlic. They add a nice hint of garlic to a simple tossed green salad.

¾ lb. crusty, country-style bread
(I like an Italian bâtard or levain)
6 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil; more
for brushing on the bread
Kosher salt
1 clove garlic, peeled and halved
2 medium shallots, minced
(about ¼ cup)
3 Tbs. sherry vinegar or red-wine
vinegar
6 large handfuls mixed baby lettuce
(about ½ lb.), washed and spun dry
Freshly ground black pepper

Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 400°F.

Using a serrated knife, carve the crust off the bread into rustic, curved slabs that are about ¼ inch thick. Save the rest of the bread for another use (such as making breadcrumbs). Brush the crusts on both sides with olive oil and season lightly with salt. Put the crusts on a baking sheet and bake until crisp and golden brown, 6 to 8 minutes. When cool enough to handle, rub the crusts lightly with the cut sides of the garlic clove. Snap the crusts into bite-size pieces. Discard the garlic.

In a small bowl, combine the shallots and vinegar with a pinch of salt and let sit for at least 10 minutes and up to 2 hours.

When ready to serve, put the chapons and lettuce in a large mixing bowl and season with a generous pinch of salt and a few grinds of pepper. Drizzle the lettuce with the 6 Tbs. olive oil. Scoop the shallots out of the vinegar and sprinkle them on the lettuce. Gently toss the salad, making sure that all of the lettuce is evenly dressed. Taste and adjust the seasoning with more olive oil, the remaining vinegar in the bowl (or more if necessary), salt, and pepper. Serve immediately on a chilled platter or individual plates, with the chapons tucked in among the lettuces.

wine choices

Pick lighter wines with lots of fruit

The dishes in this spring meal call for light, vibrant, youthful whites with juicy fruit and mouth-watering acidity and light-to-medium-bodied reds without a lot of oak or tannin. With the salad, serve a white such as Albariño or Sauvignon Blanc.

I recommend the **2005 Vionta Albariño** (\$13) or the **2005 Valminor Albariño** (\$14), both from the Rias Baixas region of northwest Spain; or if you prefer Sauvignon Blanc, look for the **2006 Babich** (\$14) from the Marlborough region of New Zealand or the **2005 Dry Creek Vineyard Fumé Blanc** (\$13.50) from California's Sonoma County.

For the main course—or if you want just one wine to serve with the entire meal—Pinot Noir is a delicious choice. Look for the **2005 A to Z** (\$18) or the **2004 Andrew Rich** (\$25). Both are from Oregon, and both have appealing red-berry fruit and soft tannins.

—Tim Gaiser is a contributing editor and a master sommelier.

Find a printable shopping list and timeline for this menu at

finecooking.com

Timeline for prepping

Up to a week ahead

Make the caramel sauce.

The night before

Marinate the hens.

Wash the lettuce and refrigerate,
covered with a damp towel.

Clean the mushrooms and refrigerate,
covered with a damp towel.

In the afternoon

Make the mushroom topping.

Make the chapons.

Cut the bread for the toasts.

Trim the asparagus.

Peel the potatoes and cover with
water in a pot.

*About 30 minutes
before guests arrive*

Mince the shallots and combine
with the vinegar for the salad.

Mince the shallots and combine
with the lemon for the potatoes.

Set the butter out to soften for
the potatoes.

Brush the baguette slices with oil.

Put the hens on a baking sheet and
leave at room temperature.

Soon after guests arrive

Put the hens in the oven.

Finish the Wild Mushroom Toasts.

Before serving each course

Toss the salad.

Make the pan jus for the hens.

Boil the potatoes.

Roast the asparagus.



The simplest of sides

These side dishes do require last-minute cooking, but they're about as easy as they get. In fact, you hardly need recipes. The potatoes are merely simmered and tossed with butter, shallots, and chervil. And the asparagus? Just roast and toss with lemon juice.



New Potatoes with Butter, Shallots & Chervil

Serves six.

2¼ lb. small (2-inch) new potatoes, such as Yukon Gold or Yellow Finn, peeled and halved lengthwise (about 14 potatoes)

Kosher salt

1 large shallot, minced (about ¼ cup)

2 tsp. fresh lemon juice

6 Tbs. unsalted butter, cut into 8 pieces, softened to room temperature

2 Tbs. chopped fresh chervil or flat-leaf parsley

Freshly ground black pepper

Put the potatoes in a medium pot, add water to cover by 1 inch, and season generously with about 2 Tbs. salt (the water should taste almost as salty as sea water). Bring to a boil, reduce the heat to a simmer, and gently cook the potatoes until tender when pierced with a fork, 10 to 12 minutes. (You want them to maintain their shape, so be careful not to overcook them.)

Meanwhile, combine the shallot, lemon juice, and a pinch of salt in a small bowl, and let sit for at least 10 minutes and up to 2 hours.

Drain the potatoes and return them to the warm pot. Immediately add the shallot mixture, butter, and chervil or parsley and gently stir to combine. Season with salt and pepper to taste and serve.

Roasted Asparagus with Lemon & Olive Oil

Serves six.

These roast quickly, so just pop them in the oven when the hens come out.

2 lb. asparagus, preferably thin spears (about 2 bunches)

¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil

Kosher salt

2 to 3 tsp. fresh lemon juice; more as needed

Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 450°F. Snap off and discard the fibrous bottom ends of the asparagus spears. Put the asparagus on a large, rimmed baking sheet and drizzle with the olive oil. Gently toss the asparagus with the oil until it's evenly coated. Distribute the asparagus so that it's in an even layer. Sprinkle generously with salt and roast until tender (bite into a spear to check), 10 to 15 minutes. Transfer the asparagus to a platter, toss with lemon juice and salt to taste, and serve.

Roasted Cornish Game Hens with Wildflower Honey & Orange

Serves six to eight.

Cornish game hens work well for entertaining. They're a nice departure from chicken, and they don't require any last-minute carving. Marinating in honey and basting with butter adds flavor and encourages the skin to brown, but sometimes they also need a flash under the broiler to finish.

3 Cornish game hens (1½ to 2 lb. each)

6 Tbs. plus ⅓ cup dry white wine, such as Sauvignon Blanc or Pinot Grigio

1½ Tbs. honey (I prefer wildflower honey)

1½ Tbs. chopped fresh thyme

2 bay leaves, preferably fresh, each torn into about 4 pieces

Pinch crushed red pepper flakes

1 medium orange

1 small yellow onion, cut crosswise into ¼-inch-thick slices

1 Tbs. kosher salt

Freshly ground black pepper

3 Tbs. unsalted butter, melted, for basting, plus 1 Tbs. butter, not melted, for the sauce

1 cup low-salt chicken broth



Discard the giblets from the hens or reserve for another use. Using kitchen shears, cut along both sides of the backbones and remove them. Then cut each hen in half along the breastbone. Trim off the wing tips and put the hens in a large bowl.

In a small bowl, combine the 6 Tbs. wine, honey, thyme, bay leaves, and red pepper flakes, and stir to dissolve the honey (it's all right if it doesn't dissolve completely).

Using a vegetable peeler, peel the zest from the orange in large strips, letting the strips drop into the bowl with the hens. Add the honey mixture and the sliced onion to the bowl. Toss well, cover, and refrigerate for at least 4 hours or overnight, tossing the hens occasionally.

About half an hour before cooking, remove the hen halves from the marinade and gently pat them dry, trying not to disturb the thyme clinging to them. Arrange the hens on a heavy-duty rimmed baking sheet and let sit at room temperature for 30 minutes. (Discard the remaining marinade.) Position a rack in the top third of the oven and heat the oven to 450°F.

When ready to roast, season the hen halves on both sides with the salt

and several grinds of pepper. Turn them skin side up. Roast the hens, basting occasionally with the melted butter and rotating the pan for even browning as needed, until an instant-read thermometer inserted into the meaty part of a thigh registers 175° to 180°F (be careful not to hit the bone), about 30 minutes.

If the skin is somewhat pale, baste the hens, turn the broiler to high, and broil, rotating the pan frequently, until the hens are nicely golden, about 2 minutes. (Watch carefully to prevent burning.) Transfer the hens to a serving platter and tent with aluminum foil.

While the rimmed baking sheet is still hot, add the remaining $\frac{1}{3}$ cup wine and use a wooden spoon to scrape the brown bits from the bottom of the pan. Pour the wine and juices into a small saucepan and add the chicken broth. Boil the sauce over high heat until it thickens ever so slightly, 2 to 3 minutes; it should be more like a jus than a thick sauce. Off the heat, whisk in the remaining 1 Tbs. butter. Taste and add salt and pepper, if needed. Keep warm.

To serve, pour a small amount of the sauce on and around the hens and pass the remainder at the table.



Vanilla Ice Cream with Espresso-Caramel Sauce

Serves six; yields about 1½ cups sauce.

You can make the caramel sauce up to a week in advance and refrigerate; it may separate, so stir to combine as you gently reheat the sauce before serving. If you don't have an espresso machine, just pick up a cup at the local café.

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup heavy cream

1 cup granulated sugar

3 Tbs. brewed espresso

1 Tbs. Kahlúa (optional)

3 pints vanilla ice cream

About $\frac{1}{2}$ cup chocolate-covered espresso beans, roughly chopped, for sprinkling (optional; for sources, see p. 78)

Measure the heavy cream into a liquid measuring cup. Put $\frac{1}{2}$ cup water in a small, heavy saucepan with steep (at least 4-inch) sides. Add the sugar and swirl the pan to moisten it. Cover and bring to a boil over medium heat, swirling the pan occasionally, until the sugar dissolves, about 1 minute. Increase the heat to high and cook, still covered but checking frequently, until the sugar starts to turn light brown, 3 to 7 minutes. Remove the lid and continue to cook, swirling the pan occasionally, until the sugar turns dark amber, 2 to 4 minutes. Immediately remove the pan from the heat, and slowly and very carefully stir in the heavy cream; it will bubble and splatter. Continue to stir until the sauce is smooth.

Pour the caramel into a small, heatproof bowl, and let it cool slightly. Stir in the espresso and the Kahlúa, if using.

To serve: If the caramel is cold or has thickened from sitting, reheat it gently over low heat. Put a scoop or two of ice cream into six individual cups or dishes. Drizzle some caramel on top and sprinkle with a spoonful of espresso beans, if using.

Tasha DeSerio is co-owner of Olive Green Catering in Berkeley, California. ♦

The Most Delicious Glazed Ham

From the market to the kitchen,
here's how to shop for and bake the perfect ham

BY BRUCE AIDELLS



Whether it's for Easter dinner or just a big family gathering, nothing is easier to make or pleases a crowd quite like a baked ham. Since hams are sold fully cooked, the heavy lifting has already been done for you. All you need to do is warm it up, slice, and serve. It's almost embarrassingly easy, and if that's all you did, it would be quite tasty. But there's a very simple way to make a plain baked ham even better: brush it with a sweet glaze while it's heating and then whisk together a quick, snappy sauce using the pan juices. My method and recipes that follow will show you how. Before you can start cooking, though, you need to shop. Read on for a quick course on how to choose a ham.

A city ham is brined, smoked, and cooked

What is a ham? At its most basic, it's a hind leg of pork, but that definition doesn't tell you whether the meat has been salt-cured, brine-cured, smoked, air-dried, aged, cooked, or some combination of all of those. Ham can be prepared in numerous ways, but for the recipe on the next page, you'll need one that's been cured with a brine, then smoked and fully cooked. These are called city hams, as opposed to uncooked country hams, which are cured by rubbing the meat directly with salt and sugar. Pretty much all the cooked hams you see in the supermarket are going to be city hams.

Making sense of ham grades: it's all about the water

In the past, city hams were immersed in a brine for three or four weeks before being smoked and cooked. But most producers today "brine" their hams by injecting them with a curing solution of water, salt, sugar, and usually phosphates and nitrites as well. Injecting a ham flavors and preserves it more quickly than does immersing it in a brine, and it also forces extra water into the meat. The amount of water in the ham determines its grade, which you'll find on the label.

Ham. This highest grade of ham has a clean, delicate pork flavor and a fine, lean

texture that resembles that of a chop. It's considerably more expensive than other grades, though, and your local supermarket may not carry it. Ordering by mail will, of course, only add to the cost of the ham. (For sources, see p. 78.)

Ham in natural juices. This grade is somewhat confusingly named since the "natural juices" are actually added water (many hams in this grade weigh up to 10% more than their raw weight due to the extra water). These hams have a fine, meaty quality when baked, and the added water does help ensure that they stay juicy. This grade is a good value and is readily available at most supermarkets.

Ham, water added. The percentage of added water in this grade will be stated on the label (usually in fine print). A ham that says "water added—15%" means it weighs 15% more than its raw weight.

Ham and water product. Most producers of this lowest grade pump as much water as they can into the ham, which adds weight and allows them to sell it at a lower price. If the amount of water exceeds 50%, the ham must be labeled "water and ham product," since there is more water by weight than meat.

A ham from any of these four grades will work fine for the Oven-Glazed Ham recipe on the next page, but for the best flavor and texture, I recommend buying "ham" or else "ham in natural juices."

What about nitrite-free hams?

Nitrites are used in curing hams to preserve the meat's color and inhibit bacterial growth. Lately, chemical nitrites have fallen somewhat out of favor due to health concerns—studies in the 1970s showed that when exposed to high heat, nitrites could potentially become carcinogenic, specifically in bacon.

As a result, some producers now sell "nitrite-free" hams. These hams still contain nitrites, but they're from a natural source, such as celery juice (nitrates in the celery juice become nitrites during processing).

The standard supermarket ham will keep for about 10 days in the refrigerator, but if you buy a nitrite-free ham, be aware that it will have a shorter shelf life.

A half-ham can serve a crowd

The two highest grades of ham (see text at left) are sold as either whole or half hams. For up to 14 people, a half-ham is sufficient.

The butt half is the upper part of the ham. Its meat tends to be very tender and flavorful—and there's more of it—but it often contains part of the hip bone, which makes carving a little awkward.

The shank half is the lower part of the ham. It's easier to carve, but because the muscles in this region get more exercise, this cut is tougher and chewier.

Bone-in ham delivers more flavor

I prefer bone-in hams over boneless. I find that any meat cooked on the bone has better flavor, and in the case of ham, it also has better texture. When producers remove the bone from a ham, they have to then reshape the meat (in a machine called a vacuum tumbler) so it won't fall apart when sliced. This can give boneless ham a bit of a spongy texture. And there's one more reason I like bone-in hams: The leftover bone is great for flavoring soups, beans, and other dishes (see p. 76 for a collard greens recipe using a ham bone). If you can find only boneless ham, try to pick one that has the natural shape of the leg, which indicates that it was minimally tumbled.

Avoid spiral-cut hams

"Spiral-cut" hams are partially boned hams that have been sliced before packaging. I don't recommend them because they tend to dry out when baked, and they often come already coated with a commercial-tasting glaze.

Follow this simple method for a perfect glazed ham

Oven-Glazed Ham with a Pan Sauce

Serves twelve to fourteen.

A supermarket “city ham” is already fully cooked, so heating it isn’t essential. But a warm ham tastes better, and baking concentrates the meat’s flavor and improves its texture. It also allows you to jazz up the ham with one of my glaze and pan sauce combinations.

1 half-ham, preferably bone-in (7 to 9 lb.)

1 glaze & sauce recipe, at right

Follow the instructions below:



To carve the ham, slice it thinly, working your way around the bone as best you can. Don't worry if the slices are not an even thickness.

BAKE THE HAM:

Position a rack in the lower third of the oven and heat the oven to 325°F.

Trim away any skin and external fat to a thickness of about 1/4 inch. Set the ham fat side up and score the fat 1/4 inch deep with diagonal slices every 2 inches so that it forms a cross-hatched diamond pattern.

Set the ham in a sturdy roasting pan or a baking dish. It should fit fairly snugly with only a couple of inches of space on any side. Add the liquid from the glaze & sauce recipe to reach a 1/4-inch depth. Bake, adding water as needed to maintain 1/4 inch of liquid, until an instant-read thermometer inserted into the center of the ham registers 105° to 110°F, 1 3/4 to 2 1/4 hours (it should take about 15 minutes per pound).

BRUSH WITH THE GLAZE:

Remove the ham from the oven and raise the temperature to 425°F. Add more water to the pan so the liquid is about 1/2 inch deep.

Using a large spoon or pastry brush, smear the glaze (from a recipe at right) generously over the top of the ham. Return the pan to the oven (even if it hasn't reached 425°F yet) and bake until the glaze on the ham bubbles and begins to darken, 10 to 15 minutes; the ham should have an internal temperature of 120° to 125°F.

Remove the ham from the oven and transfer to a carving board or large platter. Tent loosely with foil and let rest for 20 to 30 minutes while you make the pan sauce. During this period, the ham's internal temperature should rise to 130° to 140°F.

MAKE THE SAUCE:

Pour the pan juices into a gravy separator or a 4-cup Pyrex measuring cup. Let sit for 10 to 15 minutes to allow any fat to rise and then pour or spoon off the fat and discard (some hams don't exude much fat).

Pour the pan juices into a 2-qt. saucepan, whisk in the sauce ingredients (except the cornstarch mixture) from the glaze & sauce recipe and bring to a boil. Taste the sauce, and if the flavor isn't as intense as you'd like, continue to boil to concentrate the flavors as desired.

Stir in about half the cornstarch mixture and whisk until the sauce thickens slightly, about 15 seconds. Add more of the cornstarch mixture for a thicker sauce. Set aside and keep warm while the ham rests.

Carve the ham, arrange on a platter, and serve with the sauce alongside.





Cherry-Pomegranate Glaze & Sauce

Yields enough for 1 Oven-Glazed Ham.

- 1 1/4 cups pomegranate juice** (see From Our Test Kitchen, p. 72)
- 1/2 cup cherry preserves**
- 2 Tbs. Dijon mustard**
- 1/4 cup packed light brown sugar**
- 1/4 cup kirschwasser or other cherry liqueur**
- 1/4 cup sweetened dried tart cherries**
- 1 Tbs. cornstarch mixed with 3 Tbs. water**

Before you start, choose one of these glaze & sauce recipes

For baking the ham: Pour 1 cup of the pomegranate juice into the roasting pan and add enough water to reach a 1/4-inch depth, as indicated in the Oven-Glazed Ham recipe. Add more water during baking as needed.

To make the glaze: Gently warm 1/4 cup of the cherry preserves in a small saucepan. Stir in the mustard and brown sugar to combine. Smear over the ham as instructed in the Oven-Glazed Ham recipe.

To make the sauce: In a small saucepan combine the kirschwasser, dried cherries, and the remaining 1/4 cup pomegranate juice. Bring to a boil, cover, and simmer for 5 minutes. Add this mixture, along with the remaining 1/4 cup cherry preserves, to the pan juices and boil as instructed in the Oven-Glazed Ham recipe. Add the cornstarch mixture as instructed.



Maple, Tea & Cardamom Glaze & Sauce

Yields enough for 1 Oven-Glazed Ham.

- 1 cup brewed tea** (something basic like Lipton is fine)
- 1 cup apple cider**
- 1/2 cup pure maple syrup**
- 1/4 cup packed light brown sugar**
- 1/4 tsp. ground cardamom**
- 2 Tbs. cider vinegar**
- 1 Tbs. cornstarch mixed with 3 Tbs. water**

For baking the ham: In a medium bowl, combine the tea, cider, and 1/4 cup of the maple syrup. Pour this mixture into the roasting pan and add enough water to reach a 1/4-inch depth, as indicated in the Oven-Glazed Ham recipe. Add more water during baking as needed.

To make the glaze: In a small bowl, mix 2 Tbs. of the maple syrup with the brown sugar and cardamom to make a thick, wet paste. Smear over the ham as instructed in the Oven-Glazed Ham recipe (use a spatula or your fingers if it's easier).

To make the sauce: Add the remaining 2 Tbs. maple syrup and the vinegar to the pan juices and boil as instructed in the Oven-Glazed Ham recipe. Add the cornstarch mixture as instructed.

Tangerine Marmalade Glaze & Sauce

Yields enough for 1 Oven-Glazed Ham.

I like tangerine marmalade for this recipe, but you can use any orange, lemon, or other citrus marmalade or even apricot preserves.

- 1 1/2 cups store-bought orange juice**
- 1/2 cup tangerine or other citrus marmalade**
- 1/4 cup packed light brown sugar**
- 1/4 tsp. ground ginger**
- 1/8 tsp. ground cloves**
- 2 Tbs. fresh lemon juice, more to taste**
- 1 Tbs. cornstarch mixed with 3 Tbs. water**


For baking the ham: Pour the orange juice into the roasting pan and add enough water to reach a 1/4-inch depth, as indicated in the Oven-Glazed Ham recipe. Add more water during baking as needed.



To make the glaze: Gently warm 1/4 cup of the marmalade in a small saucepan set over medium-low heat. Stir in the brown sugar, ginger, and cloves to combine. Smear over the ham as instructed in the Oven-Glazed Ham recipe.

To make the sauce: Add the remaining 1/4 cup marmalade and lemon juice to the pan juices and boil as instructed in the Oven-Glazed Ham recipe. Add more lemon juice to taste. Add the cornstarch mixture as instructed.

Bruce Aidells is the author of Bruce Aidells's Complete Book of Pork and The Complete Meat Cookbook. ♦

A tall stack of golden-brown, flaky biscuits sits on a green cloth. The biscuits are stacked high, showing their layered, flaky texture. The top biscuit is slightly more golden than the ones below. The background is softly blurred, showing hints of a kitchen setting.

How to Make Flaky, Buttery Biscuits

An unusual mixing method is the secret to the flakiest buttermilk biscuits you've ever tasted

BY PETER REINHART

There are two types of people in the world: those who like tender biscuits and those who like flaky biscuits. I am without a doubt in the flaky camp. And in my quest to create a biscuit that's as flaky as the best pie dough and so delicious that it needs no added butter or jam, I've experimented with lots of recipes and techniques. The method I've settled on is somewhat unorthodox, but it's virtually foolproof, and more important, it consistently delivers the most amazing biscuits.

Usually, flaky biscuits are made by cutting cold fat—either butter, shortening, or lard—into flour, mixing in liquid, and then rolling or patting

out the dough and cutting it. Sounds straightforward, but the results can be unpredictable, particularly for the novice. Several variables influence whether biscuits turn out flaky or not: the choice of fat, its temperature, how thoroughly you cut it into the flour, and how much you work the dough as you mix and shape it. And it's hard to be consistent in all these matters. My recipe eliminates most of the variability by incorporating a few clever tricks.

The only fat I use is very cold butter. Some people insist that you can't make a flaky biscuit without shortening and lard, which are pure fats, but I wholly disagree. Although it's true that butter is only 85% fat (the remaining 15%

Flaky Buttermilk Biscuits

Yields about ten 2¾-inch biscuits or eighteen 2-inch biscuits.

8 oz. (1¾ cups) unbleached all-purpose flour; more as needed for shaping the dough

1 Tbs. granulated sugar

2¼ tsp. baking powder

¾ tsp. kosher salt

¼ tsp. baking soda

4 oz. (8 Tbs.) very cold unsalted butter

¾ cup very cold buttermilk

Heat the oven to 500°F and position a rack in the middle of the oven. Line a rimmed baking sheet with parchment. Put the flour, sugar, baking powder, salt, and baking soda in a large mixing bowl and stir with a whisk to distribute the ingredients evenly.

1 Cut the butter into small bits and toss with the flour. With a sharp knife or a bench knife, cut the cold butter crosswise into ¼-inch-thick slices. Stack 3 or 4 slices and cut them into three even strips. Rotate the stack a quarter turn and cut the strips in half. You should create 6 small bits of butter per slice. Toss the butter bits into the bowl with the flour mixture. Continue cutting all the butter in the same manner and adding it to the flour mixture.

When all the butter is in the bowl with the flour, use your fingers to separate the butter bits (they tend to stick to each other), coat all the butter pieces with flour, and evenly distribute them throughout the flour mixture. Don't rub the butter too hard with your fingertips or palms, as this will melt the butter. You're just trying to break the butter pieces apart, not blend the butter into the flour.

2 Give it a little stir. When all the butter is evenly distributed, add the cold buttermilk and stir with a large spoon until all or most of the flour is absorbed by the buttermilk and the dough forms a coarse lump, about 1 minute.

3 Pat and fold the dough. Dust a work surface with flour and dump the dough onto the floured surface, cleaning out the bowl with a spatula or a plastic bowl scraper. Dust the top of the dough and your hands with flour, and press the dough into a ¾-inch-thick

rectangle. Sprinkle a small amount of additional flour on the top of the dough. If making one of the variations on p. 50, sprinkle on one-third of the cheese, onions, or herbs now. Fold the dough over on itself in three sections, as if folding a letter (also called a tri-fold). With a bench knife or metal spatula, lift the dough off the counter and dust under it with flour to prevent sticking, if necessary. Dust the top with flour and press the dough out again into a ¾-inch-thick rectangle (sprinkle on another one-third of the variation ingredient, if using) and repeat the tri-fold. Repeat this procedure one more time (three times in all).

4 Cut the biscuits and bake. After the third tri-fold, dust under and on top of the dough, if needed, and roll or press the dough into a ½-inch-thick oval. Dip a 2-inch or 2¾-inch round biscuit cutter (for sources, see p. 78) in flour and start cutting biscuits, dipping the cutter in flour between each biscuit. Press straight down to cut and lift straight up to remove; twisting the biscuit cutter will seal the sides and interfere with rising. Use a bench knife or spatula to transfer the biscuits to the baking sheet, placing them about ½ inch apart.

Gently gather any scraps of dough, pat and roll out again, and cut more biscuits from the remaining dough. You can gather and roll the scraps two times total and still get good results (the more times you roll out, the tougher the biscuits will be).

Put the baking sheet in the oven and reduce the temperature to 450°F. Bake for 8 minutes; rotate the pan 180 degrees; continue baking until both the tops and bottoms of the biscuits are a rich golden brown and the biscuits have doubled in height, revealing flaky layers on the sides, 4 to 6 minutes more. It's all right if some butter seeps from the biscuits. Remove the pan from the oven and set it on a cooling rack, leaving the biscuits on the pan. Cool the biscuits for at least 3 minutes and serve them hot or warm (they will stay warm for about 20 minutes).



is a combination of water and milk solids), nothing can match butter for flavor, and my results prove that you absolutely can use it to make a flaky biscuit.

I don't cut the butter into the flour. This step really sets my recipe apart from the pack. Instead of using a pastry cutter to blend the butter into the flour, I simply slice the butter into small, thin bits and toss them with the flour. That's it. This method ensures that the butter bits stay large, and when there are large bits of fat in the dough, there will be scrumptious flakes in the biscuits later.

I mix the dough briefly. When I add the buttermilk to the flour and butter, I stir just enough to bring the mixture together into a coarse ball of dough. Overworking the dough turns biscuits tough.

Finally, I fold the dough. For my biscuits, I borrow the folding technique that's used in croissant and puff pastry dough. It creates many layers of dough and fat, which encourages the biscuits to puff up while they bake, creating maximum flakiness.

Start cold, end hot

When making the dough, use very cold butter and buttermilk, the colder the better. For the most flakiness, the butter needs to remain in firm bits and pieces.

Bake in a super-hot oven. Heat the oven to 500°F, and then after you put the pan into the oven, reduce the heat to 450°F. The high heat sets the dough quickly, trapping the butter, which releases steam as it melts and encourages the dough to puff.



Shown clockwise from top right: Cheese Biscuits, Fresh Herb Biscuits, and Caramelized Onion Biscuits.

3 Easy Variations

Cheese Biscuits

Because of all the delicious cheese, these biscuits may spread a bit as they bake, but they're so good, it really doesn't matter how they look.

2 cups grated sharp Cheddar, Gruyère, Gouda, or provolone

Make the biscuit dough as directed in steps 1 through 3 of the recipe on p. 49.

When making the tri-folds, sprinkle one-third of the cheese on the dough surface before each fold. If some of the cheese falls off while folding the dough, simply scoop it up and add it to the next fold. It will look like a lot of cheese, but it will melt and almost disappear into the biscuits when you bake them.

Roll out, cut, and bake the biscuits as directed in step 4.

Caramelized Onion Biscuits

2 large yellow onions, halved lengthwise, trimmed, and thinly sliced lengthwise

1 Tbs. vegetable oil

2 Tbs. granulated sugar

1 Tbs. balsamic vinegar

At least a few hours and up to a day before you plan to make the biscuits, put the onions and the oil in a large skillet over medium heat and cook, stirring occasionally, until they are soft and translucent, 8 minutes. Add the sugar and balsamic vinegar, and continue cooking and stirring until the onions are very soft and caramelized, 10 to 15 min-

utes. If the onions brown too much or the bottom of the pan gets too brown before the onions are soft, add some water, about 2 Tbs. at a time. Let the onions cool at room temperature for 30 minutes, chop coarsely, transfer to a container, seal, and refrigerate until cold.

Make the biscuit dough as directed in steps 1 through 3 of the recipe on p. 49. When making the tri-folds, spread one-third of the caramelized onions on the dough surface before each fold.

Roll out, cut, and bake the biscuits as directed in step 4.

Fresh Herb Biscuits

Strong herbs like rosemary, oregano, sage, and thyme can easily overpower the biscuits; use these in moderation.

¾ cup minced fresh tender herbs such as basil, parsley, dill, chervil, cilantro, or a combination

Make the biscuit dough as directed in steps 1 through 3 of the recipe on p. 49.

When making the tri-folds, sprinkle one-third of the herbs on the dough surface before each fold. If some of the herbs fall off while folding the dough, simply scoop them up and add to the next fold.

Roll out, cut, and bake the biscuits as directed in step 4.

Peter Reinhart is the author of seven books on bread and food. He teaches classes on food and culture, as well as baking, at Johnson & Wales University. ♦



Carrots

Pure & Simple

This quartet of delicious recipes shows that you don't have to fuss to highlight the essential sweet flavor of carrots

BY DAN BARBER

Eighteen years ago, I sat in the dining room of the famed restaurant Lutèce, where André Soltner, the chef and owner, stood pointing a raw carrot at me. “I don’t want to re-create the carrot,” he said, shaking his head. “That’s not my job. My job is to find the best carrot and respect it.” He was responding to what he thought was the mindlessly, maybe even recklessly, creative new breed of young chefs. As he towered over me in his starched whites and chef’s hat, both his words and his tone—one part advice, three parts threat—made a lasting impression.

These days, as chef of a restaurant attached to an 80-acre working farm just north of New York City, I’ve had ample opportunity to heed Chef Soltner’s words. The restaurant’s menu is dictated by the day’s harvest, and my job consists largely of letting the ingredients speak for themselves. This is particularly true for carrots, which are naturally delicious. Whether they’re slender or stout, orange or purple, Nelsons or Chantenays, or just your garden-variety supermarket carrots, there’s no need to fuss when cooking them.

My recipes show off the versatility of carrots without forgetting Chef Soltner’s wisdom. There’s a very simple roasted carrot recipe with a touch of pure maple syrup; it’s especially wonderful with winter carrots but delicious at any time of year. The carrot-walnut salad is bright and crunchy; dressed



Pickled



Pan-roasted



A soup



A salad

with orange juice, cider vinegar, honey, and walnut oil, it's a perfectly refreshing summer dish and a far cry from the predictable carrot salads we've all had at one time or another. The pickled baby carrots zing with vinegary tartness and provide yet another way to enjoy (or to preserve) the harvest. And the carrot soup gets a hint of warmth from fresh ginger, which complements the carrots' earthiness. Serve the soup garnished with raw apple for an elegant first course or sip it from a mug alongside a grilled cheese sandwich on an autumn afternoon.

A word on where to find the best carrots. If you can, I urge you to shop for your carrots at a farmers' market (to find one near you, see p. 78) or a store that carries locally grown carrots. Your reward will be remarkable flavor. And the recipes on the following pages will be all the more delicious for it.

Carrots & the seasons

Carrots are available all the time at the grocery store, and they'll always look and taste the same. But when you grow them yourself or buy them from a farmer, you'll notice that their character changes with the seasons. The young carrots at the farmers' market in late spring and early summer have a delicate flavor and juiciness that's best appreciated fresh—shave them into a salad for an afternoon lunch and you needn't do much more. But in late fall, after the first soft frosts have spoken, their flavor becomes more complex and sweet, a result of the cold temperatures converting the roots' starches to sugars. To highlight this natural sweetness, roasting is the best option—apply just enough heat to caramelize the sugars.

Carrots come in many colors and shapes, from purple to white, slender to chubby, tapered to conical, even round. While all share certain qualities, some varieties are juicier, earthier, and sweeter than others.





Maple Pan-Roasted Baby Carrots

Serves four.

For this recipe, baby carrots are ideal, but you can also use mature carrots if you cut them down to size, as shown in the photo tip below. You start cooking the carrots on the stovetop and then move them to the hot oven to roast. The direct heat of the stovetop jump-starts the caramelizing of the carrots.

- 1 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil**
- 1 lb. carrots with their tops on, preferably baby carrots, peeled and stems trimmed to about ½ inch**
- 1 Tbs. pure maple syrup**
- ½ tsp. kosher or sea salt; more as needed**
- ¼ tsp. freshly ground black pepper; more as needed**

Position a rack in the middle of the oven and heat the oven to 400°F.

In a large (12-inch) ovenproof skillet or sauté pan, heat the oil over high heat (the oil shouldn't smoke but should crackle when you add the carrots). Add the carrots and cook, stirring frequently, until they blister and turn golden brown in spots, 1 to 2 minutes. Add the maple syrup, salt, and pepper and toss well to coat the carrots. Remove from the heat.

Spread the carrots evenly in the skillet and transfer it to the hot oven. Roast until the carrots are tender, browned in spots, and just a little shriveled, 12 to 15 minutes. Season to taste with salt and pepper before serving.



tip: To cut a large carrot into 6 baby-carrot-size pieces, slice the carrot in half crosswise; then halve the narrower bottom end and quarter the wider stem end.



Baby Carrots Pickled in Champagne & Sherry Vinegars

Yields about 20 pickled carrots.

Serve these zesty little pickles as a starter or cocktail nibble or add them to an antipasto platter.

Kosher salt

¾ lb. baby carrots with their tops on (18 to 20 carrots, about 6 inches long and ½ inch thick at the wide end)

2 Tbs. whole coriander seeds

1 cup dry white wine

1¼ cups honey

1 cup Champagne vinegar

½ cup sherry vinegar

Bring a medium saucepan of salted water to a boil over high heat. Fill a large bowl with ice water.

Meanwhile, peel the baby carrots and remove all but about ½ inch of the green stems. Boil the carrots until barely tender, about 5 minutes. Immediately drain the carrots and then immerse them in the bowl of ice water.

In a small saucepan, toast the coriander seeds over medium heat just until they become fragrant and lightly browned, 3 to 5 minutes. Add the white wine and boil until reduced to about ¼ cup, 6 to 10 minutes.

In a medium saucepan, heat the honey over medium-high heat until it bubbles, about 3 minutes. Add the Champagne and sherry vinegars, and then the coriander and wine mixture; simmer for 5 minutes—watch carefully and reduce the heat as necessary to prevent a boil-over.

Arrange the carrots upright in a clean 1-qt. canning jar or other nonreactive container, and pour the honey mixture over the carrots. Let cool to room temperature. Cover and refrigerate for at least 4 hours but preferably 24 hours before serving the pickles. They will keep, refrigerated, for 2 to 3 weeks.

Carrot Salad with Walnut Oil & Honey

Serves six.

You might be surprised how well the toasty flavors of the walnuts and walnut oil complement the freshly grated carrot. This salad would be a delicious accompaniment to roast pork or chicken.

1½ lb. carrots, peeled and grated on the medium holes of a box grater

1 cup walnuts, toasted and chopped

½ cup dried currants

1 orange, juiced (about ½ cup)

3 Tbs. apple-cider vinegar

1 Tbs. honey

3 Tbs. untoasted walnut oil (for sources, see p. 78)

Kosher or sea salt

Freshly ground black pepper

2½ Tbs. finely chopped chives

Combine the grated carrots, walnuts, and currants in a medium serving bowl.

In a small bowl, whisk together the orange juice, cider vinegar, and honey. Slowly whisk in the walnut oil. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

Toss the carrot mixture with the vinaigrette and 2 Tbs. of the chives. Adjust the seasoning to taste. You can serve the salad immediately, but it will taste even better if you let it sit at room temperature for 15 to 20 minutes. Sprinkle with the remaining ½ Tbs. chives right before serving.



Which is the real baby carrot?

Those stubby carrot nubbins on the left in the photo may be called baby carrots, but they're actually mature carrots that have been whittled down to bite-size pieces. The true baby carrot is the immature one on the right. Real baby carrots are tender and juicy; they're usually just 4 to 5 inches long and are generally sold in bunches, with their tops on.



Tops on? Tops off?

If you see carrots at the market with their green tops still attached, that's usually a sign of freshness, though be wary if the greens look dried out or limp. When you get home, cut off the tops or they'll start to sap the carrots of their moisture, making them go limp sooner.

Buy them fresh, use them fast

At the market, look for firm carrots with smooth skin. And if possible, taste before you buy. If you're shopping at a farmstand, you might have several varieties to choose from. My tried-and-true favorites include Nelson, Napoli, and Mokum, all of which have slender orange roots and terrific flavor. Vibrant orange Chantenay carrots are another favorite—a bit stouter but just as snappy, juicy, and sweet.

Once you've purchased your carrots, use them soon, as they lose flavor and nutrients over time. True baby carrots—and I'm not talking about those whittled-down stumps sold in plastic bags—should be used within five days, while more mature carrots should last about two weeks. Store carrots in the coldest part of the refrigerator (usually that's the back of the bottom shelf). They will stay crisp longer in a plastic bag.

Velvety Carrot Soup with Ginger

Yields about 8½ cups; serves eight.

This recipe looks long, but half of the ingredients are for making a quick vegetable broth. Look for carrot juice in the produce section of your supermarket.

FOR THE BROTH:

- ¼ cup medium-diced peeled carrots**
- ½ cup medium-diced dark green leek tops (from 1 to 2 leeks; rinse thoroughly after dicing; save the white and pale green parts for the soup)**
- ½ medium onion, cut into medium dice (about ¾ cup)**
- ¼ fennel bulb, cut into medium dice (about ½ cup)**
- ¼ celery stalk, cut into medium dice (about 2 Tbs.)**
- 1 small clove garlic, smashed and peeled**
- 1 small bay leaf**
- 1 sprig thyme**
- 1 sprig parsley**

FOR THE SOUP:

- 3 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil**
- 5 medium shallots, thinly sliced (about 1 cup)**
- ¾ cup thinly sliced leeks, white and pale green parts only (from 1 to 2 leeks; rinse thoroughly after slicing)**
- 2 small cloves garlic, smashed and peeled**
- Kosher or sea salt**
- 3¾ cups medium-diced peeled carrots (about 1½ lb.)**
- 2 Tbs. granulated sugar**
- 2 cups carrot juice, either homemade or store-bought**
- 1 Tbs. peeled finely grated fresh ginger**
- Freshly ground black pepper**



3 to 4 tsp. fresh lemon juice
1 small Fuji apple

Make the broth: Put the carrots, leek tops, onion, fennel, celery, garlic, bay leaf, thyme, and parsley in a 4-qt. (or larger) saucepan. Add 10 cups cold water and bring to a simmer over medium-high heat. Reduce the heat to medium low and simmer for 1 hour. Strain the broth into a heatproof bowl and discard the solids. Measure out 5 cups of broth for use in the soup; save the remaining broth for another use. Rinse and dry the saucepan and return it to the stove.

Finish the soup: In the saucepan, heat the olive oil over medium-low heat. Add the shallots, leeks, garlic, and a generous pinch of salt. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the vegetables are softened but not browned, about 5 minutes. Stir in the carrots and sugar. Cover, reduce the heat to low, and cook, stirring occasionally, until the carrots are soft, 15 to 20 minutes.

Add the 5 cups broth and the carrot juice. Bring to a simmer, uncovered, over medium-high heat. Reduce the heat to low and simmer gently for 10 minutes.

Wrap the ginger in a small square of cheesecloth and use the cloth to squeeze the ginger

juice into the soup (discard the squeezed-dry ginger). Remove the pan from the heat.

Working in batches, purée the soup in a blender until smooth. Pour each batch of the puréed soup into a medium-mesh sieve set over a clean heatproof container. Use a rubber spatula to help the soup pass through, but don't press on the solids yet. Once the last batch has drained through the sieve, press lightly on the solids (but don't mash them through the sieve) to extract the remaining liquid. Discard the solids. Season to taste with salt, pepper, and 1 to 2 tsp. of the lemon juice.

When ready to serve, peel and core the apple and cut it into medium dice. In a small bowl, toss the apple with 2 tsp. of the remaining lemon juice. Reheat the soup, if necessary, and ladle it into individual serving bowls or cups. Serve immediately, garnishing each bowl with a small spoonful of the diced apple.

Dan Barber is the chef and co-owner of two restaurants: Blue Hill in New York City and Blue Hill at Stone Barns in Pocantico Hills, New York. ♦

Sear & Sauce for

A few key techniques guarantee great results time and again

Drying the shrimp well helps ensure a good sear.



A single layer of shrimp in a very hot pan promotes the best browning.

Tossing the shrimp in a sauce finishes the cooking and layers on the flavor.



BY TONY ROSENFELD

One of the things I love most about shrimp—and the reason I make it often on weeknights—is that it cooks so quickly. But if that is shrimp's best attribute, it can also be its fatal flaw. It cooks so fast that it's easy to overcook, and the sad result can be tough, dry shrimp whose sweet goodness has all but vanished. You won't have that problem in these saucy shrimp sautés, however, because my technique preserves shrimp's tender interior and boosts its delicate flavor. I start with a good sear and finish with a sauce, which guarantees moist, succulent results every time.

The first trick to a great shrimp sauté is to dry the shrimp well before cooking. Surface moisture is the enemy of browning, causing the seafood to steam instead of sear.

Next tip: Get the pan good and hot. I heat the dry pan on medium high for a minute or two before I even add the oil. Once it's hot—if you hold your hand above the surface, you'll feel the heat radiating off it—I add the oil. It will start to shimmer almost immediately, which tells you that the pan is hot enough to start sautéing. Only then do I add the shrimp.

Here are a couple more pointers: Arrange the shrimp in a single layer and don't fiddle with them once they're in the pan. It's tempting to keep tossing them around, but if you leave them alone for a couple of minutes, they'll brown better.

To turn these shrimp sautés into a more complete meal, I use the same pan to prepare an intensely flavored sauce with a vegetable or two, some broth, an acidic liquid for a little tang, and perhaps a touch of spice for excitement. Bring this to a boil and return the shrimp to the pan. It'll take just a minute or two for them to pick up the flavors of the sauce and cook to a perfect doneness.

Fast Shrimp Sautés



Spicy Seared Chipotle Shrimp with Zucchini & Chorizo

Serves three.

½ cup low-salt chicken broth
½ small chipotle, seeded and minced, plus 2 Tbs. adobo sauce (from a can of chipotles en adobo)
1 Tbs. tomato paste
1 tsp. light brown sugar
1 lb. shrimp (21 to 25 per lb.), peeled, deveined, rinsed, and patted dry
¾ tsp. kosher salt; more as needed
Freshly ground black pepper
¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
¼ lb. chorizo, cut into ¼-inch dice (scant 1 cup)

1 medium zucchini, cut into ½-inch dice (2 cups)
1 small yellow onion, thinly sliced (1 cup)
½ small red bell pepper, sliced into strips about ¼ inch wide and 2 to 3 inches long (½ cup)
¼ cup chopped fresh cilantro
2 Tbs. fresh lime juice; more as needed

In a measuring cup, whisk together the chicken broth, chipotle, adobo sauce, tomato paste, and brown sugar.

Sprinkle the shrimp with a scant ¼ tsp. salt and a few generous grinds of black pep-

per. Put a 12-inch skillet (not nonstick) over medium-high heat for 1½ minutes. Add 2 Tbs. of the oil and once it's shimmering hot, add the shrimp in a single layer. Cook undisturbed until the shrimp browns nicely, about 2 minutes. Flip and brown the second side, about 1½ minutes. Transfer to a large plate. The shrimp should still be a little undercooked.

Add the remaining 2 Tbs. oil and the chorizo to the pan and cook, tossing, until it starts to brown, about 1 minute. Add the zucchini, onion, and pepper,

sprinkle with ½ tsp. salt, and cook, tossing often, until the zucchini browns in places and is just tender, about 4 minutes.

Add the broth mixture to the skillet and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to medium low. Stir in the shrimp, about half of the cilantro, and the lime juice. Cook, stirring often, until the zucchini is tender and the shrimp are opaque throughout (cut one in half to check), 2 to 3 minutes. Season to taste with salt, pepper, and more lime juice. Serve immediately, sprinkled with the remaining cilantro.

For the best sautés,
look for shrimp that are:

Frozen. There's very little truly "fresh" shrimp to be had in the United States. Most supermarkets simply defrost frozen shrimp and put them on ice at the fish counter. There's no telling how long they've sat around, so buying shrimp that's still frozen is a better way to ensure freshness. Until a few years ago, this meant buying a solid block of frozen shrimp in ice. Now you can buy individually quick frozen, or IQF, shrimp in 1- or 2-pound plastic bags and defrost as many as you need quickly (it takes only 15 or 20 minutes) when you're ready to use them.

Big. I prefer larger shrimp because they offer more of a buffer against overcooking. Bigger shrimp are more expensive, but they're also easier to peel and clean. Look for 21 to 25 count, which refers to the number of shrimp per pound, rather than size designations like "jumbo" or "large," which are not standardized.

Not treated with STP.

Many shrimp these days are soaked in a saltwater solution called STP (sodium tripolyphosphate), which helps shrimp maintain its moisture during processing and cooking. This may not sound like such a bad thing, but this solution can give shrimp a saltier flavor and a bit of a spongy texture. To avoid shrimp that contains STP, check the ingredient list on bags of frozen shrimp. If you're buying from a fish counter, ask if it's been treated. If you can find only STP-treated shrimp, be sure to reduce the salt in the recipe.

Wild. I think wild shrimp tend to have a sweeter, more pronounced flavor and a firmer texture than the farmed variety. If you're lucky enough to find some wild-caught shrimp (frozen shrimp will be labeled wild or farmed), grab them, as only about 20% of shrimp sold in the United States is wild-caught.



Shrimp with Fennel, Tomato & Pernod Sauce

Serves three.

**1 lb. shrimp (21 to 25 per lb.),
peeled, deveined, rinsed,
and patted dry**
**¾ tsp. kosher salt; more as
needed**
Freshly ground black pepper
¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
**3 cups very thinly sliced fennel
(1 small to medium bulb,
trimmed and cored first)**
3 cloves garlic, smashed
**¼ cup Pernod (French anise-
flavor liqueur)**
**1 14½-oz. can petite-diced
tomatoes**
1 tsp. chopped fresh thyme
**¼ cup chopped fresh flat-leaf
parsley**

Sprinkle the shrimp with a scant ¼ tsp. salt and a few generous grinds of black pepper. Put a 12-inch skillet (not nonstick) over medium-high heat for 1½ minutes. Add 2 Tbs. of the oil and once it's shimmering hot, add the shrimp in a single layer. Cook undisturbed until the shrimp browns nicely,

about 2 minutes. Flip the shrimp and brown the second side, about 1½ minutes. Transfer to a large plate. The shrimp should still be a little undercooked.

Reduce the heat to medium. Add the remaining 2 Tbs. oil and the fennel and garlic. Sprinkle with ½ tsp. salt and cook, tossing often, until the fennel is very soft and golden brown in places, 6 to 8 minutes.

Carefully add the Pernod (it may flame up) and cook, stirring, until any flames die out and the Pernod has almost evaporated, about 1 minute. Add the tomatoes and their juice, the thyme, and about half the parsley. Bring to a boil and then reduce the heat to a gentle simmer and cook for 3 minutes to meld the flavors. Add the shrimp, and cook, tossing, until it's opaque throughout (cut one in half to check), 1 to 2 minutes. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Serve immediately, sprinkled with the remaining parsley.



Perfect doneness

In these recipes, it's hard to tell when the shrimp are done by just looking at them. So here's what to do: Cut a shrimp in half at the thickest part. It should look creamy white and opaque throughout, and the texture should be firm and springy but still moist. If it's a little translucent, cook a minute longer.

Hot Garlicky Shrimp with Asparagus & Lemon

Serves three.

1 lb. shrimp (21 to 25 per lb.), peeled, deveined, rinsed, and patted dry

$\frac{3}{4}$ tsp. kosher salt; more as needed

Freshly ground black pepper
1 lemon

6 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil

4 medium cloves garlic, thinly sliced

$\frac{3}{4}$ lb. asparagus, bottoms snapped off, halved lengthwise if thick, and cut into 2-inch lengths (2 cups)

$\frac{1}{8}$ to $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. crushed red pepper flakes

$\frac{2}{3}$ cup low-salt chicken broth
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. cornstarch

Sprinkle the shrimp with a scant $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. salt and a few generous grinds of black pepper. Using a peeler, gently shave the zest

in strips from the lemon, taking care not to get any of the bitter white pith. Squeeze the lemon to get 1 Tbs. juice.

Put a 12-inch skillet (not nonstick) over medium-high heat for 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ minutes. Add 2 Tbs. of the oil and once it's shimmering hot, add the shrimp in a single layer. Cook undisturbed until the shrimp browns nicely, about 2 minutes. Flip the shrimp and brown the second side, about 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ minutes. Transfer to a large plate. The shrimp should be a little undercooked.

Reduce the heat to medium, add the remaining 4 Tbs. oil and the garlic and cook, tossing, until the garlic starts to sizzle steadily, about 30 seconds. Add the asparagus, lemon zest, and red pepper flakes, sprinkle with $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp.

salt and cook, tossing often, until the garlic is golden brown and the asparagus looks blistered in places, 2 to 3 minutes. Add the chicken broth, cover, with the lid ajar, and cook until the asparagus is just tender, 1 to 2 minutes.

In a small dish, whisk together the cornstarch with 1 Tbs. water, stir into the asparagus mixture, and bring to a boil. Stir in the shrimp, reduce the heat to low, and cook, tossing, until the shrimp is opaque throughout (cut one in half to check), 1 to 2 minutes. Stir in the 1 Tbs. lemon juice and then add salt, pepper, and additional lemon juice to taste. Serve immediately.

Tony Rosenfeld is a contributing editor to Fine Cooking. ♦



Rhubarb's

Brighten up your favorite desserts with sweet-tart rhubarb

BY KAREN BARKER

Rhubarb can stir up some pretty strong feelings. Just ask around and you'll see what I mean. Some people love it, others swear they'll never eat it. My suspicion is that at least some of those reluctant to try rhubarb either aren't entirely familiar with it or haven't discovered its full potential. Rosy-red in color with a unique sweet-tart flavor, rhubarb can give a wonderful seasonal spark to just about any dessert; it's just a matter of knowing how much sugar to add to balance its tartness and choosing flavor partners that enhance its elusive sweet edge. When the very first stalks of rhubarb show up at the market in early spring, I like to use it in classic desserts that everyone loves, from pies to crumbles, muffins, and compotes.

Botanically, it's a vegetable

Although it's usually treated as a fruit and used mainly in desserts, rhubarb is technically a vegetable. The edible parts are the fleshy celery-like stalks. If you grow your own, be aware that the green leaves are poisonous if eaten and need to be removed.

When shopping for rhubarb, look for firm, crisp, unblemished stalks with a bright, intense color. I prefer thinner stalks, as larger ones tend to be overly stringy and tough. Wrap the stalks tightly in plastic and refrigerate them. They should stay crisp for up to five days.

You can also freeze sliced or diced rhubarb in plastic bags for up to six months. Frozen rhubarb tends to release more liquid and doesn't hold its shape as well as fresh rhubarb, so use it where texture is not essential, as in the muffins on p. 63.

To prep rhubarb for cooking, trim off the ends and any leaves still attached. Peel the fibrous exterior only if it's very tough. Cut rhubarb as you would celery, into slices or small dice, depending on the recipe.

In the kitchen, it's more like a fruit

The simplest way to cook rhubarb is to simmer it in a little liquid with sugar and other flavorings, as I do in the compote at right. You can also bake with rhubarb by adding it to cake or muffin batters, just as you would blueberries and other fruits.

In sweet preparations, rhubarb needs a good amount of sugar to balance its tartness. Cooking helps offset its natural astringency but also causes it to release a surprising amount of liquid. In compotes or sauces, where a juicy consistency is desirable, this is a boon. But if you're making a filling for a pie or crumble, you need to add a thickener, such as cornstarch or tapioca, to prevent it from being too loose.

My favorite rhubarb desserts are simple and revolve around everyday pantry ingredients. I make a Strawberry-Rhubarb Pie that's as easy as pie gets and all comfort. Sour cream adds richness to my Cinnamon Rhubarb Muffins, but it's the juice released by the rhubarb that makes them so tender and moist that you can still serve them the next day. A generous amount of oatmeal streusel tops my Rhubarb Brown Sugar Crumble, providing a crunchy contrast to the tart, juicy filling. And my Strawberry-Rhubarb Compote comes together in a heartbeat and is extremely versatile. I spoon it over buttermilk cheesecake, ice cream, or a silky panna cotta. To tell you the truth, it even makes a delicious spread for a cold pork loin sandwich.

Grow your own

To have your own supply of rhubarb, plant roots in early spring (for sources, see p. 78); seeds take much longer to become established. It's best to wait until the second year after planting to harvest, as the stalks usually aren't thick and robust enough the first year. Rhubarb is a forgiving plant that can withstand a considerable amount of neglect. In fact, you might want to plant it in a spot where you won't mind seeing it every year, as it will come back again and again.

Greatest Hits

A juicy pie



A tender muffin



A zesty crumble



A zippy compote



Strawberry-Rhubarb Compote with Vanilla & Cardamom

Yields about 4½ cups.

Cardamom gives this compote an alluring flavor. It's excellent spooned over ice cream, cheesecake, or panna cotta, and even as a spread for a pork sandwich. It will keep, covered and refrigerated, for up to 4 days.

4 cups ½-inch-thick sliced rhubarb (about 1¼ lb.)
½ cup granulated sugar; more to taste
6 Tbs. fresh orange juice; more to taste
3 Tbs. honey
¼ tsp. plus ⅛ tsp. ground cardamom
¼ tsp. kosher salt
1 small vanilla bean
3 cups hulled and thickly sliced strawberries (about 2 pints)

Combine the rhubarb, sugar, orange juice, honey, all the cardamom, and salt

in a heavy-bottomed stainless steel 3-qt. saucepan. With a paring knife, slit open the vanilla bean lengthwise, scrape out the seeds with the back of the knife, and add the seeds and the scraped pod to the saucepan.

Bring to a simmer over medium-low heat, stirring often. Simmer until the rhubarb releases its juice and becomes tender but still retains its shape, 5 to 6 minutes. Add the strawberries and simmer until they start to soften and the rhubarb breaks down slightly, 1 to 3 minutes.

Pour the mixture into a bowl. Make an ice bath by filling a larger bowl with ice and water. Chill the compote over the ice bath at room temperature, stirring occasionally, until completely cool, 10 to 15 minutes. Discard the vanilla pod. Taste the compote and add more sugar and orange juice, if needed.



Strawberry-Rhubarb Pie

Serves eight.

Don't worry if the crust cracks slightly during baking; it only adds to the homemade look of the pie.

FOR THE CRUST:

12 oz. (2 $\frac{2}{3}$ cups) unbleached all-purpose flour; more for rolling
2 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. granulated sugar
 $\frac{3}{4}$ tsp. kosher salt
4 oz. (8 Tbs.) cold unsalted butter, cut into small pieces
4 oz. ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup plus 1 Tbs.) cold vegetable shortening, cut into small pieces

FOR THE FILLING:

4 cups $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch-thick sliced rhubarb (about 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ lb.)
1 lb. strawberries, hulled and sliced $\frac{1}{2}$ inch thick (about 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups)
1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups plus 2 Tbs. granulated sugar
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup plus 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ Tbs. quick-cooking tapioca
2 Tbs. fresh orange juice
1 tsp. finely grated orange zest
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. ground cinnamon
 $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. ground clove
 $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. ground allspice
 $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. kosher salt
2 Tbs. cold butter, cut into small pieces

FOR THE GLAZE:

1 large egg yolk

Make the crust: In a food processor, combine the flour, sugar, and salt, and pulse to combine. Add the butter and shortening and pulse until the mixture resembles coarse meal, about 1 minute. Transfer the mixture to a large bowl.

Fill a measuring cup with $\frac{1}{2}$ cup very cold water. While tossing and stirring the flour mixture with a fork, add the water 1 Tbs. at a time until the dough just begins to come together in small clumps and holds together when you pinch a little between your fingers (you may need only $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of water).

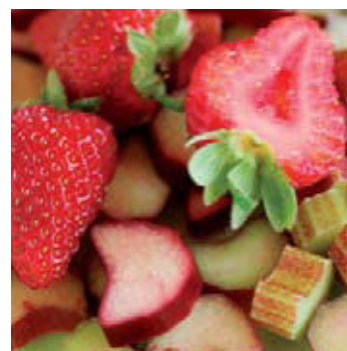
Transfer the dough to a clean work surface and gather it together with your hands. Lightly knead the dough once or twice, divide it in half, and shape the halves into disks. Wrap the disks separately in plastic and refrigerate for at least 1 hour or up to 2 days.

Prepare the filling: Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 375°F. In a large mixing bowl, combine the rhubarb, strawberries, sugar, all the tapioca, orange juice, zest, cinnamon, clove, allspice, and salt. Toss gently to mix well, and then let sit for at least 10 minutes and up to 30 minutes (while you roll out the bottom crust).

Assemble the pie: If the dough was refrigerated for several hours or overnight, let it sit at room temperature until pliable, about 20 minutes. On a lightly floured surface, roll out one of the dough disks into a $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch-thick circle, 12 to 13 inches in diameter, and transfer it to a 9-inch Pyrex pie plate. Pour the filling into the pie shell and dot the top with the cold butter. In a small bowl, beat the egg yolk with 1 tsp. water. Brush the edges of the pie shell with some of the egg glaze.

Roll out the second dough disk as above and set it over the fruit filling to form a top crust. Press the edges of the dough together to seal the crust, trim the overhang to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch, and fold it under. Flute or crimp the dough all around. Brush the top crust with the remaining egg glaze (you won't need all of it). Cut four 1- to 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch-long steam vents in the top crust.

Set the pie on a foil-lined rimmed baking sheet and bake until the pastry is golden brown and the fruit juices bubble thickly out of the pie, 70 to 80 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool completely before serving, about 4 hours.



What pairs well with rhubarb?

Spring strawberries and rhubarb are a classic combination, but other sweet fruits such as peaches, apples, and pears make wonderful partners, too. Accent flavors like vanilla, caramel, cinnamon, ginger, orange juice, and orange zest as well as brown sugar make a nice complement, showing off rhubarb's bright personality. Nuts provide great textural contrast.

Cinnamon-Rhubarb Muffins

Yields 12 medium muffins.

These muffins are best when freshly baked, but they're still good the second day. Just reheat them in a 350°F oven for 3 to 4 minutes to refresh them.

FOR THE MUFFINS:

9 oz. (2 cups) all-purpose flour
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup granulated sugar
 $2\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. baking powder
1 tsp. ground cinnamon
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. baking soda
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. kosher salt
1 cup sour cream
4 oz. (8 Tbs.) unsalted butter, melted and cooled slightly
2 large eggs
1 tsp. pure vanilla extract
 $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch-diced rhubarb (7 $\frac{1}{4}$ oz.)

FOR THE TOPPING:

3 Tbs. granulated sugar
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. ground cinnamon

Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 400°F. Line a 12-cup muffin tin with paper or foil baking cups.

Make the muffin batter: In a large mixing bowl, combine the flour, sugar, baking powder, cinnamon, baking soda, and salt and whisk to blend.

In a medium bowl, whisk together the sour cream, melted butter, eggs, and vanilla until smooth. Lightly stir the sour cream mixture into the dry ingredients with a spatula until the batter just comes together; do not overmix. Gently stir in the diced rhubarb. The batter will be thick.

Divide the batter among the muffin cups, using the back of a spoon or a small spatula to settle the batter into the cups. The batter should mound a bit higher than the tops of the cups.

Make the topping:

In a small bowl, combine the sugar and cinnamon and mix well. Sprinkle a generous $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. of the cinnamon-sugar mixture over each muffin.

Bake the muffins until they're golden brown, spring back most of the way when gently pressed, and a pick inserted in the center comes out clean, 18 to 22 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let the muffins cool in the pan for



5 to 10 minutes. Carefully lift the muffins out of the pan—if necessary, loosen them with the tip of a paring knife—and let them cool somewhat. Serve warm.



Rhubarb Brown Sugar Crumble

Serves six to eight.

Vanilla ice cream is a natural with this homey favorite.

1 Tbs. unsalted butter, softened at room temperature

FOR THE TOPPING:

$4\frac{1}{2}$ oz. (1 cup) all-purpose flour
1 cup lightly packed light brown sugar
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup old-fashioned oats
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. ground cinnamon
 $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. kosher salt
4 oz. (8 Tbs.) cold unsalted butter, cut into small pieces

FOR THE FILLING:

7 cups $\frac{1}{3}$ -inch-thick sliced rhubarb (about 2 lb.)
1 cup lightly packed light brown sugar
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup cornstarch
1 Tbs. fresh lemon juice
2 tsp. finely grated lemon zest (from 1 medium lemon, using a rasp-style grater)
 $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. kosher salt

Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 350°F. Grease an 8x8-inch Pyrex baking dish with the softened butter.

Make the topping: In a food processor, combine the flour, brown sugar, oats, cinnamon, and salt and pulse several times to combine. Add the cold butter and pulse until the mixture has the texture of coarse meal and clumps together when squeezed lightly, about 1 minute.

Make the filling: Combine the rhubarb, brown sugar, cornstarch, lemon juice, lemon zest, and salt in a large bowl and stir with a spatula until evenly mixed. Transfer the rhubarb mixture to the baking pan, and sprinkle the topping evenly over the fruit; the pan will be very full, but the crumble will settle as it bakes.

Bake until the topping is lightly browned, the rhubarb is tender (probe in the center with a skewer to check), and the juices are bubbling thickly around the edges, 45 to 60 minutes. Transfer to a rack to cool to warm or room temperature and to allow the juices to thicken, at least 1 hour.

Karen Barker is the pastry chef and co-owner of the award-winning Magnolia Grill restaurant in Durham, North Carolina. ♦

Knife Sharpeners

Find the One That's Right for You

BY ADAM RIED



When it comes to sharpeners, choices abound. We'll help you sort through the options—from simple stones to high-tech electric machines—to find your best match.

As a cook, I like to think my kitchen ducks are in a row. Recipe reviewed? Check. Ingredients prepped? Always. Work space organized and tidy? Of course. Knives sharp? Um... well... OK, I'll confess: Knife sharpening usually falls by the wayside. But I'm not alone. When I was preparing for this article, I borrowed dozens of knives from fellow cooks, and judging from the condition of those blades, it seems that lots of other cooks are lax about sharpening their knives, too.

That's a pity, because the merits of a sharp knife become apparent the moment you swipe through an onion with one. It's pure pleasure. A sharp knife cuts easily and precisely, requiring little more pressure than the knife's own weight to do the job.

By the end of this project, I was used to working with truly sharp knives. From now on, that's how I'll be keeping mine, and I hope to help you put aside your qualms and make knife sharpening part of your routine, too. Of course, that means you'll need a knife sharpener—the question is, which one?

Different sharpeners for different people

Making sense of every available model (there are scores on the market) and explaining all the technicalities about each one would require volumes. But introducing you to many of the types of sharpeners so you know what your options are—well, that much this article can do. From there, you can ask yourself some questions: How much time are you willing to invest in learning to use the tool? And how much time are you willing to spend sharpening? How much money can you spend? Then you can shop around, talk to experts at cutlery or kitchenwares shops, and ultimately find a specific model you like.

To get the lay of the land, I picked the brains of several experts on the subject of knife sharpeners. And then the *Fine Cooking* staff and I spent some time using 14 sharpeners in five general categories.

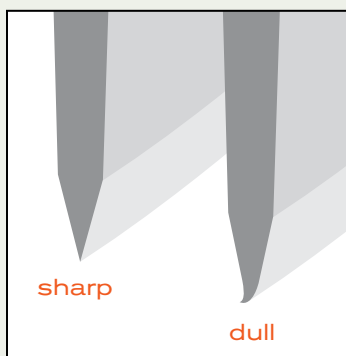
Our lineup included sharpening stones, a variety of manually operated sharpeners in several designs, and electric machines. Some of the devices were costly; others, cheap. Some were surprisingly easy to use; others had a steeper learning curve, requiring dexterity, coordination, or patience. But overall, we were pleasantly surprised to find most of the sharpeners fairly easy to use and effective. By the end of our research, we felt confident that transforming a blade from dull to sharp is much easier than we had imagined.

So rest assured, somewhere among these choices, you'll find a sharpener that's well suited to you. But before you start to explore your options, it's worthwhile to learn a thing or two about knife edges and how sharpeners in general work.

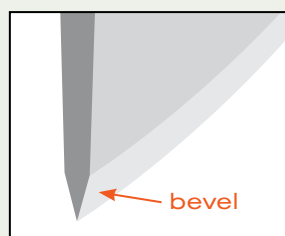
Understanding edges and angles

To form a knife's cutting edge, the metal on one or both sides of the blade is ground at an angle, called a bevel. Some blades have two bevels at slightly different angles; these are called double beveled.

Many popular American and European kitchen knives have roughly 20-degree bevels on both sides of the blade (see illustration at right). Some traditional Asian knives, however, have a different edge design, with a bevel on just one side of the blade, or bevels of a narrower angle, closer to 15 degrees than 20. A knowledgeable retailer should be able to explain the edge geometry of your knife



The blunt truth about dulling. *The cutting edge of a blade is very fine, thin, straight, and therefore, sharp. Contact with hard surfaces, such as bone, or alas, your cutting board, causes that thin edge to roll over, as shown above. This makes a knife feel dull.*



What's a bevel? *The cutting edge of a knife is ground at an angle, or beveled. On most kitchen knives, the angle is about 20 degrees. This is the angle you want to maintain when you're sharpening.*

A steel is not a sharpener

Knife experts may debate the technicalities of sharpening, but there's accord on one point: Regular maintenance of the edge can slow down, though not prevent, dulling. The tool that professionals and home cooks alike use to maintain the edges of their knives is often called, in a confusing misnomer, a "sharpening steel." But a sharpening steel doesn't technically sharpen; rather, it hones, straightening microscopic serrations along the cutting edge of the blade. True sharpening removes metal from the blade to re-create that fine, thin edge. Most steels won't remove much, if any, metal.

The surface of a steel may be smooth, finely grooved, or covered with super-fine diamond abrasive, but regardless of the finish, steels are meant to do one thing—hone. A steel can also help straighten microscopic curls in the cutting edge, provided they are not too severe. If you have a good sharp knife, steeling it once or twice a week will extend the length of time it stays sharp, but if your knife is already dull, don't expect a steel to sharpen it.



Find a video demonstration of using a steel at finecooking.com

and how to tailor the sharpening process to accommodate it.

How a sharpener restores an edge

Knife sharpeners work by stripping away metal to form new bevels, ideally at an angle that closely matches the original. But you don't need to obsess over getting the angle exactly right. For most kitchen knives, consistency trumps precision, says David Marks, a professional knife sharpener and owner of Stoddard's, a Boston cutlery store and sharpening service: "As long as you keep the same angle throughout the process, it doesn't matter if you're off by a couple of degrees from the original angle." Since consistency is key, many knife sharpeners incorporate some means of setting the angle for you.

To renew a dull edge, sharpeners use abrasives. By running the knife against the abrasive, you can strip away metal and restore the edge. Different sharpeners use different abrasives: diamond, ceramic, tungsten carbide, natural stone, and manufactured stone, to name a few. These abrasives can range from coarse to fine: 220 grit, for example, is coarse, while 1,000 grit is fine. (The higher the grit number, the finer the abrasive.) Coarse abrasives efficiently strip away metal but rough up the cutting edge. To smooth the edge, many sharpeners also include a fine abrasive.

Let's take a look at your options

Our observations about the types of sharpeners on the following pages are based heavily on our experience using them. Why? Because if a sharpener is a pain to use, then it's going to stay in the drawer where it will be of minimal benefit to our knives. We tried the sharpeners with a variety of knives—all stainless steel—including paring, slicing, boning, utility, and chef's knives of various lengths; most were tragically dull when we started. We didn't try serrated, ceramic, or other specialty knives.

For sources for the sharpeners shown here, see *Where to Buy It*, p. 78.

Is it sharp?

If your knife effortlessly glides into a tomato with no pressure or pushing, you know it's sharp.

How often should you hone and sharpen?

Many professional chefs hone or "steel" their knives before every cooking session. In an ideal world, you would do the same. In reality, though, steeling daily or even weekly can help. So hone whenever it crosses your mind—even the casual use of a steel will extend the life of an edge.

Actually sharpening the knife is another story. How often to sharpen depends on how you care for and use your knives. If you cook a lot, steel less often than you should, and really enjoy a sharp knife, you will probably need to sharpen two or three times a year. You'll know it's time to sharpen when honing doesn't restore the edge as it once did. Keep in mind that while you can hone as often as you'd like, you shouldn't sharpen too often. Eventually, sharpening begins to wear away the blade. As you remove metal, you move up the blade toward the spine, and the blade becomes thicker, making it more difficult to get a good edge.

Option #1

Sharpening stones

The stone is arguably the oldest, most venerated sharpening tool. There's a variety to choose among: natural, manufactured, ceramic, and diamond (see sidebar, opposite). And stones come in different grits (often in kits with two or three grits, or as a single reversible stone with different grits on each side); you generally have to use at least two, coarse and then fine, to sharpen properly. Prices depend on size, material, and number of grits in the kit and range from \$5 to more than \$100.

We tried large (8-inch) and small (5-inch) stones, including a ceramic stone used with water, and two diamond stones, one used with water and the other used dry. And we followed the manufacturer's directions for the recommended motion (pushing, pulling, circular stroke, start from the tip, start from the heel). Generally, the directions were easy to follow.

What the experts say David Marks, the expert knife sharpener at Stoddard's, applauds anyone who wants to learn to use a stone. "There's something nice about the ritual," he says, "and you can really customize your edge." Marks also points out that nothing you do with a stone is irreversible. If you're worried that you've done something wrong, just get some help and try again to correct any minor mistakes you may have made.

Chef Deepak Kaul, at the restaurant *Rendezvous* in Central Square in Cambridge, Massachusetts, says that sharpening on a stone reinforces the "intimate connection" between him and his knives.

Our experience A stone requires patience, concentration, and time. At first, we found stones challenging, but with practice we started getting good results. The hardest part is judging and maintaining the angle. (We worked without angle guides, but some stones come with them, or you can purchase guides separately.) Some of our testers also found it difficult to switch the blade from side to side and to sharpen evenly along the length of the blade. Most of us found larger stones easier to use than smaller ones.



That said, if you stick with the process, you may eventually find yourself in the “stone zone”—when the motion feels natural and your hands almost effortlessly set the blade at an acceptable angle.

Pros You can get precise control over the sharpening angle; appeals to the artisan in us; shape and size allow for easy storage.

Cons Requires practice to do well; initially challenging to set and maintain angle (though you can buy angle guides); time consuming; water and especially oil stones can be messy.

Is it right for you?

If you're hurried or harried, this probably isn't the choice for you. But if you're a knife enthusiast or have a bit of the artisan in your soul, using a stone can be a satisfying tactile and mental experience.

Stone materials

There are numerous specific types of sharpening stones, but most fall under two broad categories: natural or manufactured. **Natural stones** are usually quarried and can be quite expensive. **Manufactured stones** are constructed from a variety of materials. Some common options are India stones, ceramic stones, and diamond stones.

Whether natural or manufactured, all stones come in various grades, densities, and grits, and they therefore remove metal at different rates. A knowledgeable retailer can help you choose one that's right for you.

Wet or dry?

Sharpening stones can be used wet or dry. When you sharpen a knife, it sheds particles of metal. The advantage of wetting a stone with oil or water during use is that the lubricant will remove the particles, which otherwise might clog the stone's surface and reduce its effectiveness and longevity. The disadvantage is that it's messier than using the stone dry.

[Find](#) a video demonstration of using a sharpening stone at finecooking.com

Option #2

Pull-over sharpeners

These inexpensive, basic sharpeners have a tungsten-carbide abrasive set into a plastic handgrip. To use, hold the knife steady on a work surface with the blade facing up and, holding the sharpener in your other hand, run it along the length of the blade. Easy.

What the experts say These are easy to use, but Bob Kufahl, of Lansky Sharpeners, says tungsten carbide is an aggressive abrasive that can leave the cutting edge more “ragged” than he likes; to smooth the edge, he recommends following up with a fine-grit sharpener.

Our experience We looked at several models with very similar designs and tried the \$9 unit shown below. It got the job done, but some of us worried that we might slip and cut ourselves on the upward-facing blade. That said, no one got hurt, so perhaps we worried needlessly.

Pros The sharpening angle is set so you don't have to worry about it when you sharpen; very quick; very simple; very cheap; pretty effective.

Cons Feels dangerous to some; doesn't create a polished edge.

Is it right for you?

If you're looking for a super-simple, super-quick sharpening option, and you don't mind the finish being a bit rough, this could be the ticket. You can't beat the price.

Option #3

Pull-through sharpeners

Most sharpeners in this category have guides to set the sharpening angle. To use them, you hold the sharpener steady on a work surface while you draw the blade through the slots.

Some are single-stage sharpeners, with one kind of abrasive; others have multiple stages so you can aggressively sharpen and then refine the edge. The types of abrasives vary widely, as do the prices, from about \$10 to \$90. We tried five models, priced in the low to middle range.

What the experts say In terms of design, these sharpeners vary wildly, so most experts were reluctant to discuss them as a general category. One knife retailer did mention, however, that he finds these devices better suited to maintaining a reasonably sharp edge than to restoring a very dull one, since they are generally less aggressive than an electric sharpener and don't let you adjust the angle the way a stone does.

Our experience “Is that all there is to it?” was the common sentiment; however, many testers did say that they needed to concentrate on the pressure and position of the blade in the angle guides. With some exceptions, testers were more impressed with the ease of use than with the results.

Pros Fast and easy to use; small and easy to store; some models include a fine-grit stage to “finish” the edge, which can also be used for edge maintenance in place of a steel.

Cons Some testers found the blades' motion through the slots to be rough and unpleasant; effectiveness varied widely among models.

Is it right for you?

If you want a quick sharpening solution or maintenance device, consider a pull-through sharpener. Design and effectiveness vary widely, so consult a trusted retailer for advice.

Option #4

V-stick sharpeners



You can find several models of these sharpeners on the market, with varying angles, number of sticks, abrasives, and prices (from about \$10 to \$50). To use, set the sticks into the base at the desired angles, hold the blade perpendicular to the work surface, and draw the blade down the length of the stick while pulling from the heel to the tip. Alternate sticks to cover both sides of the blade. We tried a \$12 version with ceramic rods (above), as well as a \$30 version with diamond-coated rods (shown on p. 64).

What the experts say Howard Korn, cutlery expert and owner of KnifeCenter.com, likes these systems because they're compact, simple to use, and the clever design lets you vary the sharpening angle.

Our experience We were impressed by how effectively these sharpened. And one tester was very enthusiastic, exclaiming, "I would use this all the time." Some testers noted that it took concentration to control the knife movement.

Pros Compact and easy to store; low tech; very effective; design helps you set your knife at the correct angle yet leaves you in control.

Cons Requires concentration to maintain correct knife position through the entire stroke.

Is it right for you?

If you'd like to get involved in the sharpening process but don't want to devote the time that stones require, here's your sharpener. As one user put it, "There's a Zen quality to the motion and the sound. I like that."

Option #5

Electric sharpeners

Electric sharpeners are similar to some pull-throughs—you pull the knife through several stages of abrasives, ranging from coarse to fine—but they add a motor to the equation for more aggressive metal removal. The angle is set for you, and in each stage there are two slots, one for sharpening each side of the cutting edge. The abrasives are generally diamond or ceramic. Prices range from about \$40 to \$400. We worked with a mid-priced, three-stage model with diamond abrasives that cost about \$130.

What the experts say Electric sharpeners have their fans and their detractors. Everyone we consulted said that the machines are simple to use and effective—KnifeCenter.com's Howard Korn describes them as “easy and straightforward”—yet nearly every expert shared a couple of concerns:

- The coarser stages can be aggressive, so you run the risk of wearing down your knives prematurely if you overuse the coarse stage, apply too much pressure, or use too many strokes. The machines can be fine when used carefully, but their high-speed motors can remove a lot of steel. So be careful with timing as you draw the knife through the slot to make sure all areas of the blade get even contact.
- The machines can present a problem for knives with bolsters (the wider portion of the blade just before the handle) that are too thick to fit through the slots. After repeated use, a notch can develop near the heel of the blade, where grinding stops because the bolster won't fit.

Our experience Our testers' reactions ran the gamut from “fantastic!” to “easy to use, but the grinding sound really freaks me out.” Everyone agreed that the machine noticeably improved even the dulllest blades. Because the machine seemed so self-explanatory, some testers dove right in without consulting the directions, and therefore timed their strokes incorrectly or used the most aggressive stage needlessly; both can cause the edge to wear down unevenly over time.



Pros Fast; clean; very simple; effective when used carefully; removes all the angle guesswork by setting and maintaining it for you; let's you hone blades (by using the fine-grit stage) or truly sharpen them (by using the coarse stage).

Cons Loud, high-pitched grinding noise during use; could be too aggressive if used without reading the directions; with extended use, might damage knives with thick bolsters; expensive.

Is it right for you?

If you want very sharp knives at all times and don't want to work too hard at getting them that way, an electric sharpener is your tool, indisputably quicker and easier than stones and many manual systems, and more convenient than sending knives off to a professional sharpening service. If you choose an electric sharpener, don't just dive in—invest time up front and learn how to use the machine properly.

Option #6

Professional sharpening services

Consult the yellow pages or the Internet to find a professional sharpening service in your area. You might also inquire at cookware and cutlery shops or at good hardware stores. Or if you're willing to pack up your knives, you can send them off to be sharpened. Many professional services charge about \$1 per inch of blade, while others may have set prices, such as \$3 for paring knives, or \$8 for 8- to 10-inch chef's knives; serrated blades or very badly damaged knives may cost extra.

What the experts say Before you entrust a sharpener with your knives, ask questions and start developing a relationship. Look for a reputable, experienced knife sharpener who will inform you about his equipment and methods (see "Finding a pro," at right).

Our experience What's not to love? Once you know and trust your sharpener, simply drop off a dull knife, wait a couple of days, and pick up a sharp one. The most exertion you'll experience is pulling out your wallet.

Pros As easy and fully hands-off a sharpening method as you can come by; minimizes the chances of premature blade wear if done properly.

Cons You have to spend a couple of days without your knives while they are out being sharpened; can be costly over time.

Knife care 101

When it comes to knife use, care, and storage, a modicum of TLC can help prevent damage and preserve sharpness.

1 Avoid outright abuse such as hacking through bones or frozen foods.

2 Choose a relatively soft cutting board, like wood—preferably end-grain butcher block—or polyethylene plastic.

3 Store knives on a magnetic strip or in a block. Avoid knocking the cutting edge against other surfaces.

4 Use a bench scraper, not your knife, to scoop up chopped foods from the cutting board.

5 Wash knives by hand.

Is it right for you?

If you're a hands-off type who would rather call a professional than attempt a project yourself, wrap up those knives and send them out.

Finding a pro

It's not a good idea to turn over your knives to just anyone who offers sharpening services. Ask around for recommendations: your friends, a cook at your favorite restaurant, or a local cutlery retailer. Or post an inquiry for "reputable knife sharpener" on your favorite cooking-related blog, Web site, or e-group.

When you find a likely candidate, ask a few questions:

1) Do they use stones or machines to sharpen? The use of a stone suggests the person might be a real knife enthusiast.

2) If they use a machine, is it fully automated, or does it require a human attendant? The latter may be preferable, because knives can easily be oversharpened on a sharpening wheel.

3) Do they sharpen all knives the same way, or can they adjust their methods for different blades?

4) Can they duplicate the factory edge? Sharpen serrated or specialty knives? Correct damaged blades without removing too much metal?

5) Will they show you a knife they have sharpened? If so, take a careful look. Does the edge appear to be evenly sharp from the heel to the tip? For knives with bolsters, the cutting edge and the bottom edge of the bolster should be flush. There should be no evidence of a notch near the bolster.

Last, take a look around. You'll be better off at a store that sells quality cutlery than at a place that sharpens lawnmower blades.

Adam Ried is a freelance food writer with 10 years of equipment-testing experience under his belt and the proud owner of a collection of newly sharp knives (which he intends to keep that way). ♦

Edible signs of spring

People who live in wintry climates look forward to spring for obvious reasons, but for food-lovers, there's an added bonus: fresh ramps, morels, and fiddleheads. These spring treats are at their prime for only a few weeks a year, and they can be difficult to find because they're not grown commercially, at least not extensively. Instead, they're usually gathered in the wild by foragers.

You may have some of these delicacies growing in your own neck of the woods, but before you forage, be sure you know exactly what you're looking for—there are inedible look-alikes out there, and some are poisonous. To be on the safe side, bring along a seasoned forager to help with identification, or forget foraging altogether and just buy them from a reputable source. If you can't find them locally, see *Where to Buy It* on p. 78 for a mail-order source.

—Allison Ehri, test kitchen associate



Morels

These conical honeycombed mushrooms are treasured for their rich, intense flavor and are delicious when simply sautéed in butter. Enjoy them on their own, or top roasted or grilled meats and poultry with them.

Store fresh morels in a brown paper bag in the fridge and use them within a few days. They're often home to little critters, so before cooking, cut them in half and examine their chambers, flicking out any unwanted guests. Unless they're extremely dirty, don't wash morels; just brush them off with a damp towel.



Ramps

Part of the onion family, ramps taste like a cross between spring onions and scallions, with an earthy-garlicky undertone. Also known as wild leeks, they're good in everything from scrambled eggs to stir-fries. Try baking fish on a bed of ramp leaves, and sauté the ramp stems and bulbs to pile on top.

Store freshly picked, uncleaned ramps at room temperature with the bulbs submerged in water, like a bouquet. Use before the leaves start to wilt, in about three days.

To clean ramps, rinse, remove the roots, and peel off the paper-thin coating over the bulb. Once you've done this, the entire ramp is edible. To store cleaned ramps, wrap them loosely in moist paper towels, seal in a zip-top bag, and store in the refrigerator; they'll keep for about five days.



Fiddlehead ferns

Fiddlehead fern fronds emerge from the soil coiled into tight pinwheels and are edible only before they begin to unfurl into their mature form. They have a grassy-earthy flavor that's tasty in a mushroom ragoût or a mixed vegetable sauté.

Store fiddleheads in the refrigerator in a zip-top plastic bag lined with moist paper towels for three to five days. To clean them, rub off the brown chaff from the outside (some stores may have done this for you) and wash them thoroughly in cold water. Before cooking, trim the ends and then tame their slight bitterness by blanching briefly in salted boiling water before sautéing or grilling them.

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BY JENNIFER ARMENTROUT

Slicing onions

Direction makes a difference



Lengthwise

When you slice lengthwise, you're cutting with the grain of the onion. These slices hold up better during cooking, so they're a good choice for dishes like pot roast or French onion soup, where you want to see pretty strips of onion after a long cooking time.

Crosswise

When you cut the onion crosswise (across the grain), you get slices that cook down and lose their shape quickly. This cut is ideal if you want melt-in-your-mouth onions for a marmalade or for topping a steak sandwich

—A. E.



Getting to know fresh chervil

Chervil is one of the herb choices for flavoring the New Potatoes with Butter, Shallots & Chervil on p. 42. This delicate herb has a very mild flavor that hints of anise, pepper, and parsley. It's frequently used in French cooking, most notably as part of the fresh herb blend known as fines herbes (equal parts chervil, chive, tarragon, and parsley). Fines herbes are used in many egg dishes and to finish sauces. Fresh chervil's flavor is fleeting, so add it at the very end of cooking. If your market doesn't stock fresh chervil, request it. Dried chervil is no substitute, as it tends to have little flavor.

What are Cornish game hens?



You might be surprised to learn that the tasty little birds known as Rock Cornish game hens (or just Cornish game hens) aren't actually game birds. Marketers added the word "game" to the name to make them sound more exotic. In reality, they're 5- to 6-week-old farm-raised chickens, and

since they can be either male or female, they may not always be hens, either.

A cross between a Cornish chicken and a White Plymouth Rock chicken, Rock Cornish game hens range in size from 1½ to 2 pounds, and they have a milder flavor than that of mature chickens.

Roasting, grilling, and broiling are the best cooking methods for Cornish hens. You can roast them whole or cut them into halves for grilling, broiling, and speedier roasting, as in the recipe for Roasted Cornish Game Hens with Wildflower Honey & Orange on p. 42. —A. E.

Add a splash of pomegranate to your cooking

Judging by the number of prepared foods flavored with pomegranate these days—salad dressings, vodka, ice cream, even chewing gum and lollipops—this once exotic fruit has become a hot ingredient. Here are a few products you can use to add the sweet-tart flavor of pomegranates to your own cooking. (For mail-order sources for the harder-to-find products, see Where to Buy It, p. 78.)



Pomegranate vinegar

There are several vinegars flavored with pomegranate, and some are better than others. We like to use Cuisine Perle's pomegranate balsamic vinegar in marinades for red meat, and O's pomegranate Champagne vinegar is lovely in vinaigrettes.

Pomegranate juice

Introduced in the United States in 2002 by California grower POM Wonderful, pomegranate juice gets the credit for starting the pomegranate craze. Look for it in the produce section, where you'll see other brands as well. We especially like the fruity tang it adds to pan sauces, as in the recipe for Lamb Chops with Pomegranate Red-Wine Sauce in *Fine Cooking* #76 (visit www.finecooking.com for the recipe). And on p. 44 of this issue, author Bruce Aidells pairs pomegranate juice with cherry preserves to make a glaze for baked ham.

grenadine (pomegranate syrup)

Primarily used in drinks like Shirley Temples, tequila sunrises, and pink lemonade, true grenadine is pomegranate juice sweetened with sugar syrup. It's also good in sorbets and ice creams. The name comes from the French word for pomegranate: *grenade*. When purchasing grenadine, check the label to make sure you're getting the real deal; some brands are artificially flavored or contain fruits other than pomegranate.

Pomegranate molasses

Also known as pomegranate paste, concentrate, or essence, this boiled-down pomegranate juice is a key ingredient in many Middle Eastern cuisines. The name "molasses" reflects its thick, syrupy texture and not its flavor, which is nothing like sugarcane molasses. Its intensely sour yet sweet flavor can be a revelation. It especially complements walnuts, as in the dip recipe at right. It partners well with poultry and lamb, too—try adding a touch to your favorite chicken or meat marinade. Or just drizzle it over vanilla ice cream.

Unless you live near a Middle Eastern market, you'll probably have to mail order pomegranate molasses (see p. 78). It's well worth seeking out, though, and once opened, it lasts almost indefinitely in the refrigerator.



Roasted Red Pepper & Walnut Dip with Pomegranate Molasses

Yields about 1 1/4 cups; may be doubled.

Variations of this dip, called *muhammara*, are made throughout the eastern Mediterranean region. Walnuts and pomegranate molasses are constants, but the types and numbers of chiles can vary. Some versions are fiery, but this one, based on a recipe by Paula Wolfert, is not very spicy at all, and it always gets rave reviews. Serve it with pita chips.

- 3/4 cup walnuts, lightly toasted**
- 2 large red bell peppers (about 1 1/4 lb.), roasted, peeled, and seeded**
- 2 small mildly hot red chiles (such as Fresno or red jalapeño), roasted, peeled, and seeded**
- 1/4 cup crumbled stone-ground wheat crackers, such as Nabisco Wheatworth**
- 1 Tbs. fresh lemon juice; more as needed**
- 1 Tbs. pomegranate molasses; more as needed**
- 1/2 tsp. ground cumin (preferably from freshly toasted and ground cumin seed); more for garnish**
- 1/2 tsp. kosher salt; more as needed**
- 1/2 tsp. granulated sugar**
- 1 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil; more for garnish**
- 1 Tbs. pine nuts, toasted (optional)**

Finely chop the walnuts in a food processor. Blot the peppers and chiles dry with paper towels. Add the peppers, chiles, crackers, lemon juice, pomegranate molasses, cumin, salt, and sugar to the food processor. Process until mostly smooth. With the machine on, slowly pour the oil down the feed tube. Taste and add more lemon juice, pomegranate molasses, or salt, as needed.

You can serve the dip right away, but it's better if allowed to mellow in the refrigerator overnight. (The dip keeps for about 1 week.) Return to room temperature before serving, garnished with a drizzle of oil, a generous pinch of cumin, and the pine nuts, if using.



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leftovers:

Two ways to use up a baked ham, deliciously

If you make one of the glazed baked hams on pp. 44 to 47, you're probably going to have leftovers. Fortunately, there are tons of things you can do with ham beyond a ham sandwich. Here are a couple of southern-inspired ideas, one for ham and one for the ham bone.



Ham Bone Collards

Serves six.

A ham bone is the perfect flavoring for a big pot of collards, known in the South as a "mess of greens." If you don't have a ham bone, a smoked ham hock can stand in.

- 2 Tbs. vegetable oil**
- 1 medium yellow onion, halved and thinly sliced lengthwise**
- ½ tsp. cayenne**
- 2½ cups homemade or low-salt chicken broth**
- 1 meaty ham bone (from a baked ham, recipe p. 46)**
- 1½ to 2 lb. collard greens (1 large or 2 medium bunches), stemmed, roughly cut into 3-inch pieces, and rinsed (8 packed cups)**
- 2½ tsp. malt vinegar; more as needed**
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**
- Hot sauce to taste**

In an 8-qt. pot, heat the oil over medium heat. Add the onion and cook, stirring

frequently, until it begins to brown, 5 to 7 minutes. Reduce the heat to medium low and continue to cook until it's softened and golden brown, 3 to 5 minutes more. Stir in the cayenne and cook for about 30 seconds.

Add the broth, the ham bone, and ½ cup water. Pile on the collards, cover with the lid ajar, and bring to a simmer over medium-high heat. Reduce the heat to medium low and simmer, stirring occasionally, for 30 minutes. Remove the lid and continue to simmer until the greens are very tender, about 15 minutes more.

Take the pot off the heat. Put the ham bone on a cutting board, and cover the pot to keep the greens hot. When the ham bone is cool enough to handle, pull off and shred or dice any meat clinging to the bone. Stir the meat into the greens, along with the vinegar. Season with salt, pepper, and more vinegar to taste. Pass the hot sauce at the table so diners can spice up the greens to their own tastes.



Fried Ham with Redeye Gravy

Serves four.

To make this southern classic, you simply fry slices of ham and then deglaze the pan with coffee to make the redeye gravy. Usually it's made with fatty country ham, but the glazed baked hams from this issue tend to be leaner than country ham, so we've tweaked the recipe to make up for the missing fat. It may not be traditional, but it still makes a tasty and quick breakfast or weeknight supper.

- 2 Tbs. unsalted butter, softened**
- 2 tsp. all-purpose flour**
- 4 large or 8 small ¼-inch-thick slices leftover baked ham (from recipe, p. 46), glazed edges trimmed off**
- 1 cup brewed coffee**
- 1 tsp. light brown sugar**
- 1 large sprig thyme (optional)**

In a small bowl, combine 1 Tbs. of the butter with the flour. Stir with a spoon or knead with your fingertips until blended.

Heat the remaining 1 Tbs. butter in a large (preferably cast-iron) skillet over medium heat until melted and hot. Add as much of the ham as will fit without crowding and fry gently until hot and browned in spots, 1 to 2 minutes per side. Move to a platter and repeat with the remaining ham, moving it to the platter as well.

Pour the coffee into the skillet and scrape the bottom of the pan with a wooden spoon to release the drippings. Add ⅓ cup water and the sugar and thyme, if using. Simmer vigorously for about 1 minute. Whisk in the butter and flour mixture until melted, and then continue to simmer until the sauce has thickened to a light gravy consistency and the raw flour flavor has cooked off, 3 to 5 minutes. Serve alongside the ham. ♦

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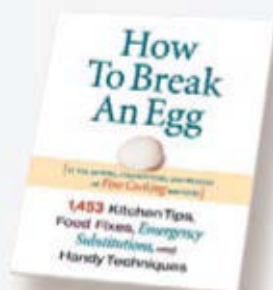


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Gail had been working in the medical field, first as a medical assistant, then as a surgical tech. The long evening surgery hours resulted in limited time at home with her family. After years, a change was needed. She came across an ad about Personal Chefs, and having a passion for food, she decided to call. "I simply needed more time at home, and to reclaim my time as my own"

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Spring Menu, p. 38

If you can't find wild mushrooms, you can order them online at Earthly.com (800-367-4709). To top her Vanilla Ice Cream with Espresso-Caramel Sauce, Tasha DeSerio recommends chocolate-covered espresso beans from Peets Coffee. An 8-ounce pack sells for \$6 at Peets.com (800-999-2132).

Enjoying Wine, p. 20

To find Greek wines, Tim Gaiser recommends using the search engine Wine-searcher.com, which can locate practically any wine and provide you with retailer contact information as well as pricing.

Glazed Ham, p. 44

The highest grade of ham (labeled simply "ham") is available at Whole Foods Markets. Vande Rose Farms' bone-in half-ham (which Bruce Aidells helped develop) is produced without antibiotics or hormones from the Duroc heritage pork breed; it's \$85 for a 7- to 8-pound ham at PreferredMeats.com (800-397-6328). Jones Dairy Farm's old-fashioned bone-in hickory-smoked half-ham is available at JonesDairyFarm.com (800-563-1004) for \$90 for a 10- to 14-pound ham (average 12 pounds). Harrington's of Vermont (www.harringtonham.com; 802-434-4444) makes traditional bone-in hams by smoking them over corncocks and maple; a 6½-pound half-ham starts at \$54.95.

Flaky Biscuits, p. 48

You'll need 2- or 2¾-inch biscuit cutters to make Peter Reinhart's flaky biscuits. You can buy a set of four round biscuit cutters, ranging in size from 1½ to 2¾ inches, at The Baker's Catalogue (KingArthurFlour.com; 800-827-6836); the price is \$10.95.

Carrots, p. 51

Dan Barber encourages buying carrots at a local farmers' market. To find one near you, visit LocalHarvest.org or www.ams.usda.gov/farmersmarkets. If you can't find baby carrots locally, you can mail order them from Melissas.com (800-588-0151). French virgin untoasted walnut oil is available at Lepicerie.com (866-350-7575), where an 8½-ounce bottle sells for \$14.75.

Shrimp Sautés, p. 56

Good-quality Spanish chorizo is available at specialty food stores or online at Tienda.com (800-710-4304) and Zingermans.com (888-636-8162). Canned chipotles en adobo are available in the Mexican food section of many supermarkets or online at MexGrocer.com (877-463-9476), where a 7-ounce can is \$2.25.

Rhubarb, p. 60

To make Karen Barker's muffins you'll need a 12-cup muffin pan and paper or foil baking cups. Both are available at KingArthurFlour.com (800-827-6836), where a Chicago Metallic muffin pan is \$18.95, and a pack of 120 paper muffin cups is \$4.95. Madagascar vanilla beans (3 for \$6.29) are available at Penzey.com (800-741-7787). And if you'd like to grow your own rhubarb, you can find rhubarb roots at most garden centers; or you can order them online from seed catalogs like JohnnySeeds.com (877-564-6697).

From Our Test Kitchen, p. 72

Look for pomegranate molasses, pomegranate syrup, and pomegranate Champagne vinegar in specialty stores or buy them online at Kalustyans.com (800-352-3451). Pomegranate molasses starts at \$6.99, pomegranate syrup is \$12.99 for a 750ml bottle, and O Basics pomegranate Champagne vinegar is \$12.99 for a 200ml bottle. You'll find 6½-ounce bottles of Cuisine Perel pomegranate balsamic vinegar at GourmetCountry.com for \$9.25. Morels, fiddleheads, and ramps are available in well-stocked grocery stores, when in season. If you can't find them, you can mail order them at Earthly.com (800-367-4709).

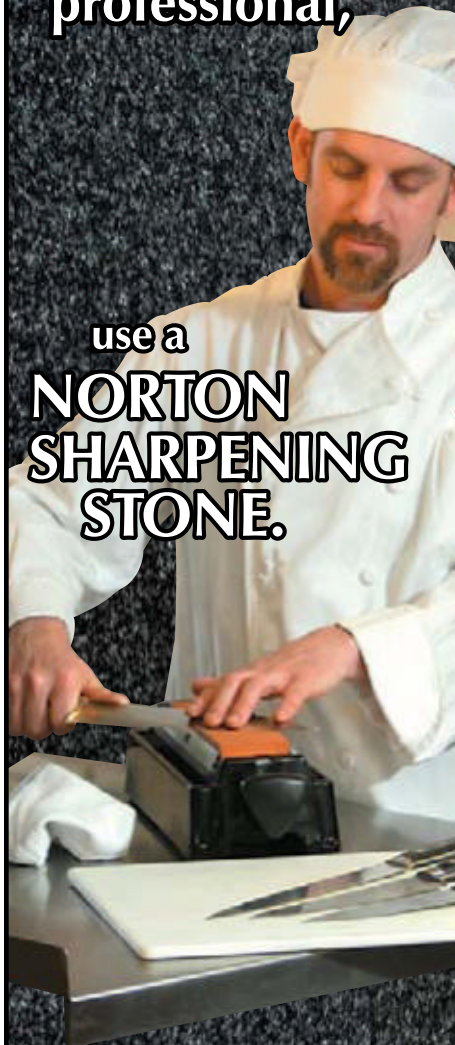
(continued on p. 80)



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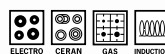
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Knife Sharpeners, p.64

Here's where to find the knife sharpeners pictured in this article.

Page 64: The Diamond Vee knife sharpener by DMT is available at KnifeCenter.com (800-338-6799) for \$28.95.

Page 67: The Norton IM200 Professional Sharpening System is \$77.95 at SharpeningSupplies.com (800-351-8234).

Page 68: The Deluxe Easy Grip tungsten carbide knife sharpener by Lansky Sharpeners is \$6.71 at KnifePro.com.

Page 69: Left, from top: The Knife-Life two-stage knife sharpener by Wüsthof is available at KitchenKapers.com (800-455-5567) for \$19.99.; the Ozitech Diamond Fingers knife sharpener by Furi is also available at

KitchenKapers.com (800-455-5567) for \$29.99; the Twinsharp Select knife sharpener by Zwilling J.A. Henckels is \$39.95 at Amazon.com. Right: the Standard Turn-Box Crock Stick sharpener by Lansky Sharpeners is \$13.93 at PremiumKnives.com (877-541-4076).

Page 70: The EdgeSelect 120 by Chef's Choice is \$139.99 at ChefsCatalog.com (800-884-2433).

There are several professional knife sharpening services available by mail. We tried The Holley Manufacturing Company and were happy with the results. For information, visit HolleyKnives.com.

Knife sharpener manufacturers

Some of the major manufacturers of knife sharpeners are listed below; visit their Web sites to learn about specific products:

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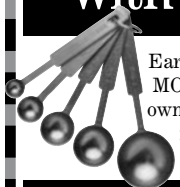
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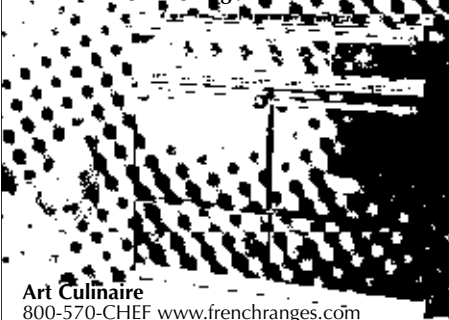
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nutritioninformation

Recipe	Page	Calories		Protein	Carb	Fats (g)				Chol.	Sodium	Fiber	Notes
		total	from fat	(g)	(g)	total	sat	mono	poly	(mg)	(mg)	(g)	
Letters	10												
Rhubarb & Dried-Cherry Chutney		60	0	0	14	0	0	0	0	0	35	1	based on 2 Tbs.
In Season	18												
Pan-Seared Artichokes w/ Sherry Vinegar & Thyme		160	80	5	18	9	1.5	7	1	0	250	9	based on 6 servings
Spring Menu	38												
Wild Mushroom Toasts		610	140	17	102	16	8	6	1	30	1300	4	based on 6 servings
Garden Lettuces w/ Garlic Chapons		210	130	3	17	15	2	10	2	0	320	2	based on 6 servings
Roasted Cornish Game Hens w/ Honey & Orange		330	210	22	4	23	9	9	3.5	140	490	0	based on 8 servings
New Potatoes w/ Butter, Shallots & Chervil		250	100	3	34	12	7	3	0.5	30	480	3	based on 6 servings
Roasted Asparagus w/ Lemon & Olive Oil		100	80	2	3	9	1.5	7	1	0	150	1	based on 6 servings
Vanilla Ice Cream w/ Espresso-Caramel Sauce		590	270	6	77	30	19	7	1	100	120	1	based on 6 servings
Glazed Ham	44												
Glazed Ham w/ Cherry-Pomegranate Glaze & Sauce		320	100	34	18	11	4	5	1	110	135	0	based on 14 servings
Glazed Ham w/ Tangerine Marmalade Glaze & Sauce		300	100	34	15	11	4	5	1	110	85	0	based on 14 servings
Glazed Ham w/ Maple, Tea & Cardamom Glaze & Sauce		300	100	34	14	11	4	5	1	110	80	0	based on 14 servings
Biscuits	48												
Flaky Buttermilk Biscuits		100	45	2	10	5	3.5	1.5	0	15	125	0	based on 18 biscuits
Caramelized Onion Biscuits		110	50	2	14	6	3.5	1.5	0.5	15	125	1	based on 18 biscuits
Cheese Biscuits		150	80	5	10	9	6	2.5	0	25	200	0	based on 18 biscuits
Fresh Herb Biscuits		100	45	2	10	5	3.5	1.5	0	15	125	0	based on 18 biscuits
Carrots	51												
Maple Pan-Roasted Baby Carrots		80	30	1	13	3.5	0.5	2.5	0	0	210	3	based on 4 servings
Carrot Salad w/ Walnut Oil & Honey		290	180	5	27	20	2	3.5	14	0	210	5	based on 6 servings
Velvety Carrot Soup w/ Ginger		130	45	2	19	5	0.5	3.5	0.5	0	200	3	based on 8 servings
Baby Carrots Pickled in Champagne & Sherry Vinegars		10	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	15	0	based on 1 carrot
Shrimp Sautés	56												
Hot Garlicky Shrimp w/ Asparagus & Lemon		380	250	27	6	29	4	20	3.5	225	560	1	based on 3 servings
Shrimp w/ Fennel, Tomato & Pernod Sauce		400	170	27	22	20	3	13	2.5	225	960	3	based on 3 servings
Spicy Seared Chipotle Shrimp w/ Zucchini & Chorizo		500	310	36	12	34	8	20	4	255	1240	2	based on 3 servings
Rhubarb	60												
Cinnamon-Rhubarb Muffins		250	110	4	32	12	7	2.5	0	70	200	1	based on 12 muffins
Rhubarb Brown Sugar Crumble		430	120	3	77	14	8	3.5	0.5	35	100	3	based on 8 servings
Strawberry-Rhubarb Compote w/ Vanilla & Cardamom		50	0	1	13	0	0	0	0	0	15	1	based on ¼ cup
Strawberry-Rhubarb Pie		630	260	6	87	29	13	9	4.5	50	150	4	based on 8 servings
Test Kitchen	72												
Roasted Red Pepper Dip w/ Pomegranate Molasses		60	40	1	5	4.5	0.5	1	2.5	0	60	1	based on 1 Tbs.
Ham Bone Collards		170	80	15	10	9	2	4	2.5	30	210	4	based on 6 servings
Fried Ham w/ Redeye Gravy		300	150	34	2	16	7	7	1	120	75	0	based on 4 servings
Quick & Delicious	84a												
Broiled Lamb Skewers w/ Arugula & Lemon Vinaigrette		650	490	32	8	55	15	32	4.5	115	760	1	based on 2 servings
Penne w/ Asparagus, Olives & Parmigiano Breadcrumbs		470	210	11	53	24	3.5	16	3	0	790	4	based on 4 servings
Pan-Fried Gnocchi w/ Bacon, Onions & Peas		470	290	9	35	33	10	18	3	40	880	3	based on 3 servings
Garlic & Herb Fried Eggs on Toasts w/ Prosciutto Crisps		410	210	15	35	23	4.5	14	2.5	220	880	2	based on 3 servings
Ginger Chicken Soup		160	80	16	4	10	2	4	3	45	700	0	based on 4 servings
Sear-Roasted Halibut w/ Roasted Red Pepper Purée		550	410	27	5	46	7	30	4.5	85	610	0	based on 4 servings
Smoky Black Bean & Cheddar Burrito w/ Baby Spinach		510	190	19	63	21	6	10	4	15	1020	9	based on 4 servings
Back Cover													
Bourbon-Chocolate Mousse		300	210	6	21	23	13	3	0	40	140	2	based on 4 servings

The nutritional analyses have been calculated by a registered dietitian at Nutritional Solutions in Melville, New York. When a recipe gives a choice of ingredients, the first choice is the one used in the

calculations. Optional ingredients and those listed without a specific quantity are not included. When a range of ingredient amounts or servings is given, the smaller amount or portion is used. When the

quantities of salt and pepper aren't specified, the analysis is based on ¼ teaspoon salt and ⅓ teaspoon pepper per serving for entrées, and ⅓ teaspoon salt and ⅓ teaspoon pepper per serving for side dishes.

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1 jar DICKINSON'S[®] Pure Seedless Marion Blackberry Preserves or your favorite DICKINSON'S[®] Preserve flavor
3 c. Vanilla Bean Ice Cream
4 oz. pkg. Cream Cheese
1/2 tsp. Almond Extract
3/4 c. Milk
Optional: Whipped Topping, Fruit pieces & Mint Leaves

Combine all ingredients in a blender & process until smooth. Serve in 6 chilled glasses. Garnish with optional ingredients. Makes 6 servings. NOTE: The preserves and cream cheese mixture makes these shakes an extra-special gourmet dessert! Also shown using DICKINSON'S[®] Pure Seedless Cascade Mountain[™] Red Raspberry, Pure Seedless Pacific Mountain[™] Strawberry & Pure Patterson Apricot Preserves.

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2/3 c. CROSSE & BLACKWELL[®] Mint Flavored Apple Jelly
1 jar DICKINSON'S[®] Lemon Curd
1 pkg. (8 oz.) Cream Cheese, softened
2 c. Whipped Topping
2 pkg. Miniature Phyllo Cups
2 Kiwi Fruit, peeled, sliced & quartered
Optional: Mint Leaves, Lemon Peel & other Fresh Fruit pieces for garnish

Blend cream cheese until smooth; add Curd and fold in whipped topping. Fill phyllo cups with lemon mixture. Top each cup with a teaspoon of softened jelly; (to soften Jelly, stir vigorously with a spoon); add kiwi pieces to each cup. Garnish with optional ingredients. Serve. Makes 30 pieces. NOTE: Top with your favorite fruit or berries along with the kiwi. The delicate mint flavor ties it all together!

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Angel Cake Supreme

1 jar DICKINSON'S[®] Pure Seedless Cascade Mountain[™] Red Raspberry Preserves
1 jar DICKINSON'S[®] Lime Curd
2 Tbsp. Water
1 10"-round Angel Food Cake
1 8-oz. container Whipped Topping
3/4 c. Powdered Sugar
Optional: Raspberries, Lime Slices & Mint Leaves

In a small bowl, mix Preserves & water; set aside. Split cake in half, horizontally. Spread Curd on bottom half, replace top. Blend 1/2 of Preserves mixture with whipped topping & powdered sugar; frost cake. Drizzle remaining preserves over top of cake. Garnish with optional ingredients. Makes 12 servings. NOTE: For a lemony twist substitute DICKINSON'S[®] Lemon Curd for the Lime Curd.

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make it tonight



A shortcut to sweetness & light

Chocolate mousse can turn any meal into a special occasion, and this simple version—made by folding whipped egg whites into a ganache—comes together so quickly that it can elevate even a weeknight dinner.

Bourbon-Chocolate Mousse

Yields 3 cups; serves four.

½ cup heavy cream
3 Tbs. confectioners' sugar
2 Tbs. bourbon
1 tsp. pure vanilla extract
4 oz. bittersweet chocolate, finely chopped
(¾ cup)
4 large egg whites*, preferably at room temperature
Pinch table salt

Put 4 small (at least ¾ cup) individual serving bowls in the refrigerator.

Bring the heavy cream and sugar to a boil in a small saucepan and remove the pan from the heat (don't just turn off the burner). Stir in the bourbon and vanilla. Add the chocolate and let it sit for 5 minutes without stirring. Whisk the chocolate and cream until smooth and then transfer the ganache to a large bowl. Don't refrigerate.

In a medium bowl, beat the egg whites and the salt with a hand mixer on high speed just until they form stiff peaks when you lift the beaters.

With a rubber spatula, fold about one-quarter of the beaten whites into the ganache to lighten it. Then gently fold in the remaining whites, taking care not to deflate them. Divide the mousse among the chilled bowls and refrigerate for at least 30 minutes but preferably 1 hour and up to 24 hours.

Serving suggestion: Top the mousse with a dollop of whipped cream or crème fraîche and sprinkle with cocoa powder, if desired. Garnish with fresh raspberries or strawberries.

*The egg whites in this recipe are not cooked, but we don't recommend using pasteurized egg whites, because they tend to separate after they're folded into the ganache.

Allison Ebri is Fine Cooking's test kitchen associate and food stylist. ♦



Keep an eye on the whites

Egg whites can go from perfectly stiff to lumpy in a matter of seconds, so as you get close, stop the mixer frequently to check on them. They're ready when the peaks stand up straight but still have visible air bubbles.

BY MARYELLEN DRISCOLL

Bridging the seasons

Spring can sometimes feel as if it's in the throes of an identity crisis. It's that in-between-winter-and-summer thing: warm one day, chilly the next. For a cook, this is actually good. Tender peas, scallions, spinach, and arugula begin to flourish, yet comfort foods still have their place. The recipes in this collection are all inspired by winter's hearty fare, but they're lighter, brighter renditions, freshened up with spring ingredients: Chicken soup gets pep from an infusion of ginger and an aromatic cilantro-scallion purée. Rustic penne pasta with olives, Parmigiano, and breadcrumbs gets tossed with crisp-tender sautéed asparagus. Fresh baby spinach and a burst of tangy lime find their way into a smoky black-bean burrito. All these dishes are easy to prepare on week-nights, and their combinations of flavors are perfectly suited to this season.



Sear-Roasted Halibut with Roasted Red Pepper Purée

Serves four.

2½ oz. roasted red pepper
(about ½ large jarred roasted pepper)
2 Tbs. sherry vinegar
½ tsp. honey
1 medium clove garlic,
peeled
¼ cup plus 2 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
4 6- to 7-oz. center cut, skin-on halibut fillets
1 Tbs. thinly sliced fresh chives or chopped marjoram

Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 375°F.

In a blender, combine the red pepper, vinegar, and honey. Turn the blender on, let it run for a few seconds, and then drop the garlic through the feed hole. With the blender still running, slowly pour in the ¼ cup oil and process until the mixture is smooth, about 1 minute, stopping to scrape down the lid and sides of the blender jar as necessary. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

Set the fish skin side down on a plate and season with salt and pepper. Heat the remaining 2 Tbs. oil in a large ovenproof skillet

(preferably cast iron) over medium-high heat until shimmering. Put the fish skin side up in the skillet, and cook until well browned, 3 to 5 minutes. Flip the fish, turn off the heat, and transfer the pan to the oven. Roast until the fish is flaky, moist, and cooked through (use the tip of a paring knife to check), 5 to 7 minutes.

Transfer the fish to dinner plates, spoon about 1 Tbs. purée onto or around each piece, sprinkle with the chives or marjoram, and serve immediately with the remaining purée on the side.

Tip: Any leftover purée will keep, refrigerated, for up to 5 days. You can serve it with chicken or pork, or thin the purée with additional olive oil to make a dressing for steamed, sautéed, or roasted asparagus or a salad of romaine hearts, red onion, and hard-boiled egg.



Ginger Chicken Soup

Serves four as a light main course.

- 1 1-inch piece fresh ginger**
- 2 medium cloves garlic, unpeeled**
- 10 to 12 oz. boneless, skinless chicken thighs, trimmed of excess fat (about 3 medium)**
- 2 cups low-salt chicken broth**
- 1 Tbs. soy sauce**
- 2 tsp. fresh lemon juice**
- ¼ tsp. Asian chile paste, like sambal oelek or Sriracha**
- ¼ cup packed fresh cilantro**
- 2 Tbs. thinly sliced scallion (green tops only)**
- Kosher salt**
- 1 Tbs. mild vegetable oil, like canola or safflower oil**
- 1 cup packed baby spinach (about 2 oz.)**

Peel the ginger and slice it into four ¼-inch coins. Using the flat side of a chef's knife or a meat pounder, smash the coins. Smash the garlic and remove the skin.

In a medium saucepan, combine the ginger, garlic, chicken, broth, soy sauce, lemon juice, chile paste, and 1 cup water. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Reduce the heat to low and gently simmer until the chicken is cooked through, about 10 minutes. Using a pair of tongs, transfer the chicken to a plate. Use a slotted spoon to remove the

ginger and garlic and discard. Keep the broth warm.

Finely chop the cilantro and scallion. Put them in a mortar, add a pinch of salt and 2 tsp. of the oil, and pound and mash with the pestle (see tip). Once the mixture begins to blend, add the remaining teaspoon of oil. Continue to grind the pestle into the cilantro mixture until it is aromatic and has the consistency of a paste.

Once the chicken is cool, slice it thinly and portion it into four soup bowls. Return the broth to a simmer and season with salt to taste. Add the spinach to the broth and continue to simmer until it's wilted, 1 to 2 minutes more. Ladle the broth and spinach evenly over each portion of chicken and then top each with a dollop of the cilantro paste.

Tip: If you don't have a mortar and pestle, mince the scallions and cilantro, transfer to a small bowl to combine with the oil, and scrape the mixture back onto a cutting board. Position the blade of a chef's knife at a 30-degree angle to the board and repeatedly drag the blade over the cilantro mixture using a bit of pressure to mash it.



Broiled Lamb Skewers with Baby Arugula & Lemon Vinaigrette

Serves two.

- 2 Tbs. fresh lemon juice**
- 2 tsp. sour cream**
- 1 small clove garlic, minced**
- Kosher salt**
- ¼ cup plus 1 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil**
- ¾ lb. boneless lamb shoulder chops or lamb leg steaks, trimmed of extra fat and cut into 1-inch cubes (1 ½ cups)**
- Coarsely ground black pepper**
- 4 oz. baby arugula (about 4 cups)**
- ½ cup very thinly sliced red onion (½ small)**
- ¼ cup crumbled feta or blue cheese (1 oz.)**

Position an oven rack 4 inches from the broiler element and heat the broiler to high. In a small bowl, combine the lemon juice, sour cream, garlic, and a pinch of salt. Slowly whisk in the ¼ cup olive oil.

In a medium bowl, combine the lamb with the 1 Tbs. olive oil, ½ tsp. salt, and ¼ tsp. pepper. Toss to coat evenly. Thread the lamb onto four small (8-inch) bamboo or metal skewers.

Put the skewers on a broiler pan and broil the lamb, flipping once, until browned on the outside but still pink inside (medium doneness), 2 to 4 minutes per side. Transfer the skewers to a small, shallow baking dish. Whisk the vinaigrette to recombine and pour 3 Tbs. over the skewers, turning to coat.

In a medium bowl, toss the arugula and onion with enough of the remaining vinaigrette to lightly coat (you may not need it all). Season with salt and pepper to taste. Pile the greens on two plates, top each salad with two lamb skewers, sprinkle with the cheese, and serve immediately.

Tip: If using bamboo skewers, soak them in water for 30 minutes before threading them.



Penne with Asparagus, Olives & Parmigiano Breadcrumbs

Serves four.

Kosher salt

5 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil; more for drizzling

1 cup coarse fresh white breadcrumbs (from about 4 slices of bread, crusts removed)

¼ cup finely grated Parmigiano-Reggiano

½ lb. penne rigate

1 lb. medium asparagus, woody ends snapped off, cut diagonally into 2-inch pieces

1 medium clove garlic, minced

½ cup coarsely chopped pitted Kalamata olives (about 20)

Finely grated zest of 1 medium lemon (about 1½ Tbs. loosely packed)
Freshly ground black pepper

Bring a large pot of well-salted water to a boil.

In a 12-inch skillet, heat 3 Tbs. of the oil over medium heat. Add the breadcrumbs and cook, stirring occasionally, until they're crispy and golden brown, about 5 minutes. Transfer to a medium bowl and stir in the Parmigiano and a pinch of salt. Wipe the skillet clean with a paper towel.

Cook the pasta in the boiling water until al dente.

Reserve a few tablespoons of the cooking water and drain the pasta.

Heat 1 Tbs. of the oil over medium-high heat in the skillet. Add the asparagus and cook, stirring frequently, until crisp-tender, about 4 minutes. Lower the heat to medium low and push the asparagus to the side. Add the remaining 1 Tbs. oil and the garlic and cook, gently mashing with the tip of a wooden spoon or spatula until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Toss the garlic with the asparagus. Remove from the heat.

Stir in the olives and lemon zest, and season with salt and pepper to taste. Add the pasta to the skillet, stirring to blend. Add enough reserved cooking water to slightly moisten, as needed, and drizzle with olive oil to enrich. Serve garnished with the breadcrumbs.

Tip: To save time, make the breadcrumbs ahead and store in a sealed container. Also, you can just snap rather than cut the asparagus into 2-inch pieces.



Smoky Black Bean & Cheddar Burrito with Baby Spinach

Serves four.

4 burrito-size (9- to 10-inch) flour tortillas

15 grape tomatoes, quartered lengthwise (from 1 pint)

2 Tbs. fresh lime juice; more as needed

¼ cup chopped fresh cilantro
Kosher salt

2 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
¼ cup raw pepitas (optional)

1 tsp. seeded and minced chipotle plus 1 tsp. adobo sauce (from a can of chipotles en adobo)

¾ tsp. ground cumin

1 19-oz. can black beans, drained and rinsed

½ cup grated sharp Cheddar
1½ oz. baby spinach (about 1½ cups)

¼ to ½ cup sour cream (optional)

Heat the oven to 250°F. Wrap the tortillas in aluminum foil and warm in the oven.

Meanwhile, in a small bowl toss the tomatoes with 1 Tbs. of the lime juice, about 1½ Tbs. of the cilantro, and a generous pinch of salt. Set aside.

If using the pepitas, heat 1 Tbs. of the olive oil and the pepitas in a 12-inch skillet over medium heat. Cook, stirring frequently, until they are puffed and some are golden brown,

1 to 2 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer the pepitas to a plate lined with a paper towel. Sprinkle with a generous pinch of salt and toss.

Return the pan to medium heat. Add the remaining 1 Tbs. olive oil. (Or if not using pepitas, heat the 2 Tbs. oil over medium heat.) Add the chipotle, adobo sauce, and cumin. Stir to blend into the oil, and then add the beans and 2 Tbs. water to the pan, stirring to blend. Simmer until warmed through, about 2 minutes. Reduce heat to low. Mash about half of the beans with a fork. Stir in the cheddar and the remaining 2½ Tbs. cilantro and 1 Tbs. lime juice. Season to taste with salt. If the beans seem too thick, add a tablespoon or two of water to thin to a soft, spreadable consistency.

Working with one tortilla at a time, spread about ¼ of the beans along the bottom third of a tortilla. Top with ¼ of the spinach, and sprinkle with about ¼ of the tomatoes and pepitas (if using). If you like, add a little lime juice and sour cream on top. Fold the bottom edge over the filling, fold in the sides, and roll up the burrito.



Garlic & Herb Fried Eggs on Toasts with Prosciutto Crisps

Serves three.

3 ¾-inch-thick slices rustic bread, such as sourdough boule or peasant bread
2 thin slices prosciutto, cut lengthwise into ½-inch-wide strips
3 Tbs. plus 1 tsp. extra-virgin olive oil
1½ tsp. minced fresh oregano
1 medium clove garlic, minced
3 large eggs
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
Parmigiano-Reggiano, for shaving

Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the broiler to high. Lay the bread slices and prosciutto strips on a foil-lined rimmed baking sheet and brush the bread on both sides with 2 Tbs. of the olive oil. Broil until the bread is golden brown on both sides and the prosciutto is lightly crisp, 2 to 4 minutes per side. Put the prosciutto strips in a small bowl (they'll continue to crisp as they cool), and set the bread slices on three plates.

Put the oregano in a small bowl. Heat 1 Tbs. of the oil in a 10-inch nonstick skillet over medium-low heat. Add the garlic to the pan and cook, stirring occasionally, until it's sizzling and fragrant but not browned, about 30 seconds. Scrape the garlic and oil into the bowl of oregano, stir to combine, and set aside.

Add the remaining 1 tsp. oil to the pan, swirling to evenly coat. Add the eggs and distribute the garlic-herb mixture evenly on top. Season with salt and pepper, cover, and cook until the yolks' edges have just begun to set, 2 to 3 minutes. (The eggs should cook gently, so lower the heat if needed.) Separate the eggs with the edge of the spatula, if necessary, and slide each egg onto a slice of the bread. Drizzle any remaining oil in the pan over the toasts, top with the prosciutto crisps, and use a vegetable peeler to shave a few strips of Parmigiano over the toasts.



Pan-Fried Gnocchi with Bacon, Onions, & Peas

Serves three.

Kosher salt
1 lb. frozen gnocchi
3 oz. thick-cut bacon (about 3 slices), cut into ½-inch-wide pieces
4 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
2 medium-small yellow onions, thinly sliced (about 2 cups)
½ cup frozen peas
1 tsp. minced fresh thyme
Freshly ground black pepper
2 Tbs. grated Parmigiano-Reggiano; more for serving

Bring a large saucepan of salted water to a boil. Cook the gnocchi according to package directions. Reserve ½ cup of the cooking water, and drain.

Meanwhile, in a large (preferably 12-inch) nonstick skillet, cook the bacon over medium heat until crispy on both sides, about 5 minutes. Transfer to a plate lined with paper towels and set aside. Pour off any fat from the skillet.

In the same skillet, heat 2 Tbs. of the oil over medium-high heat. Add the onions and cook until they begin to brown, 3 to 5 minutes.

Reduce the heat to medium and continue to cook, stirring occasionally, until the onions are limp and golden brown, 10 minutes more. Stir in the peas and thyme, season with salt and pepper to taste, and transfer to a small bowl.

Wipe the skillet clean with a paper towel, and heat the remaining 2 Tbs. oil over medium-high heat. Add the gnocchi and cook, tossing occasionally, until they're lightly brown, about 5 minutes. Gently stir in the onion mixture, bacon, and Parmigiano, along with enough of the reserved cooking water to moisten and coat the gnocchi, about 4 Tbs. Serve immediately, sprinkled with additional Parmigiano.

Tip: Gnocchi are Italian dumplings made of potatoes or flour (or both) and eggs. Look for them in the frozen foods section of the supermarket.

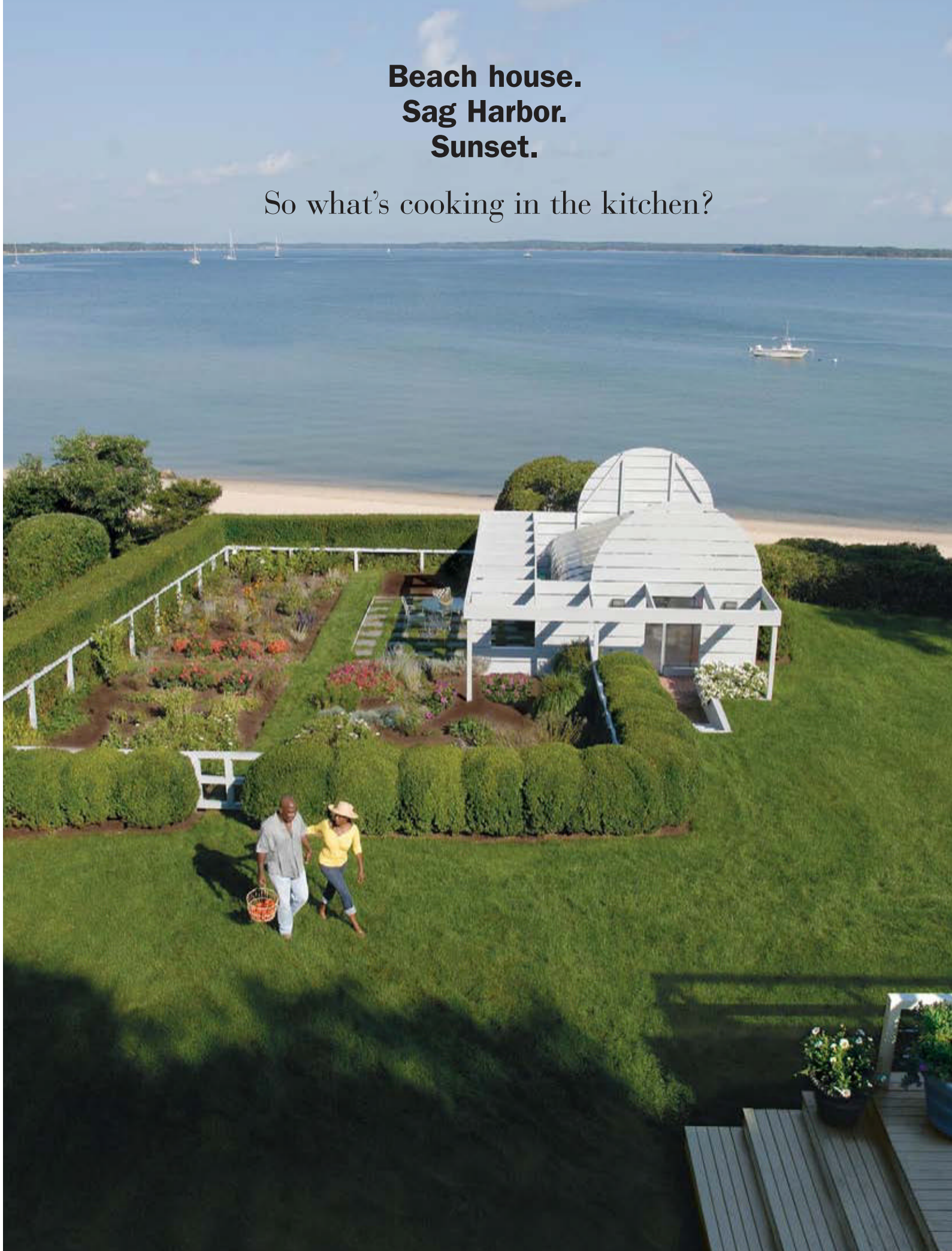
**Penthouse.
Central Park.
Sunrise.**

So what's cooking in the kitchen?



**Beach house.
Sag Harbor.
Sunset.**

So what's cooking in the kitchen?





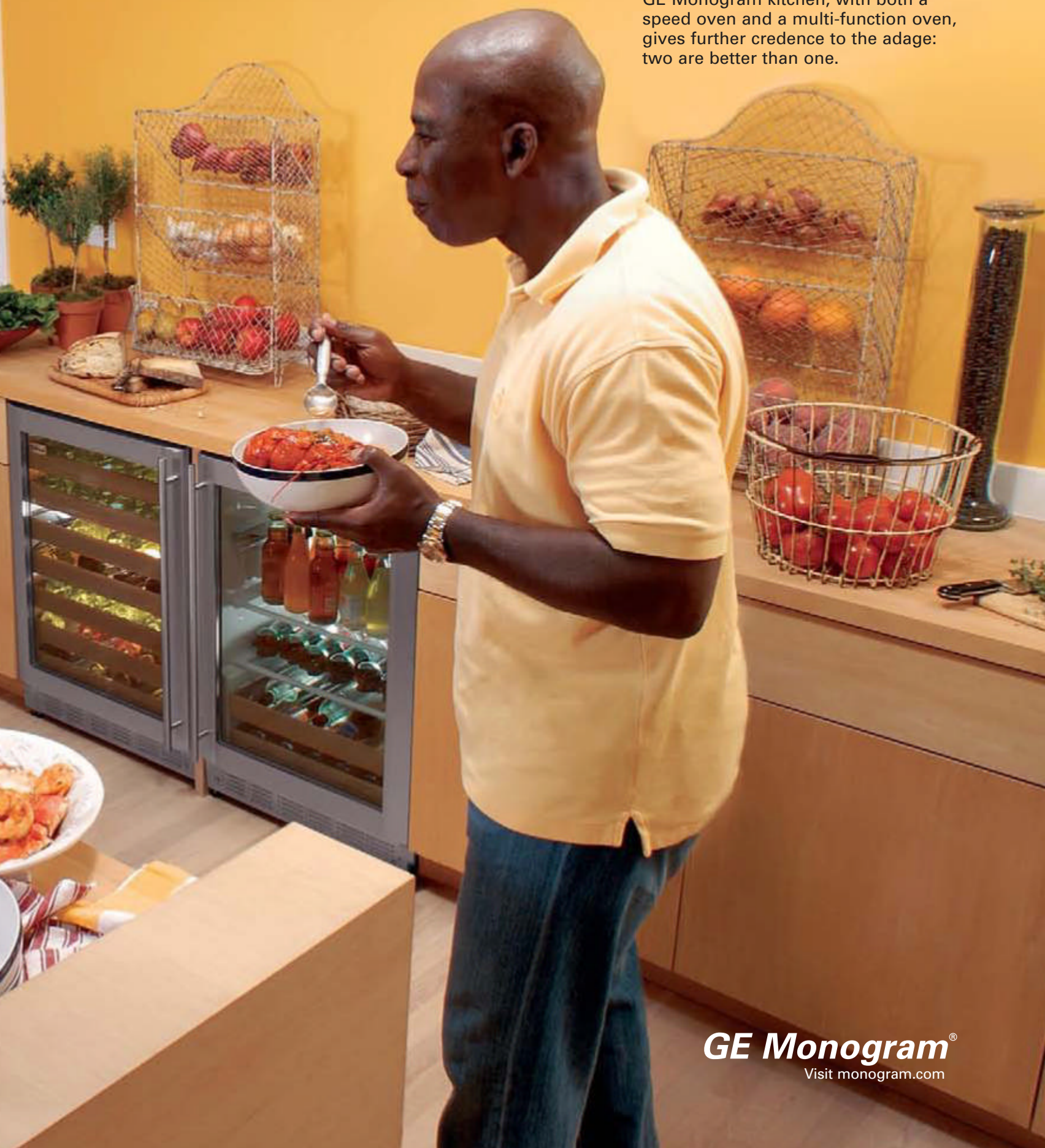
Above the rhythms of the Big Apple, B. Smith, restaurateur and lifestyle designer and her husband and business partner, Dan Gasby, create a pas de deux. In their sophisticated GE Monogram kitchen, a pair of dishwashers are completely in tune with this harmonious relationship.

imagination at work





At water's edge, B and Dan harvest herbs and tomatoes that enliven the flavors in the *cioppino*. Their spacious GE Monogram kitchen, with both a speed oven and a multi-function oven, gives further credence to the adage: two are better than one.



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